

The Loneliest

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/30622622) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/30622622>.

Rating:

Mature

Archive Warning:

Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Fandom:

僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Character:

Bakugou Katsuki, Bakugou Katsuki's Parents, Midoriya Izuku, Todoroki Shouto, Kirishima Eijirou, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead

Additional Tags:

Bakugou Mitsuki's Bad Parenting, Bakugou Masaru's Bad Parenting, Bakugou Katsuki Swears A Lot, Bakugou Katsuki is Bad at Feelings, Child Abuse, Gaslighting, Protective Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Depressed Bakugou Katsuki, Bullying, Other Additional Tags to Be Added, Slow Build, Angst, Self-Hatred, Self-Reflection, Redemption, Touch-Starved Bakugou Katsuki, Isolation, Canon-Typical Violence, Food Issues, Bakugou Katsuki Needs a Hug, Oblivious Midoriya Izuku, Bakugou Katsuki-centric, Todoroki Shouto is a Little Shit, U.A. Support Department (My Hero Academia), Parental Shuuzenji Chiyo | Recovery Girl, Manipulation, False Accusations, Suicidal Ideation, Protective Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Kidnapping, Monoma Neito is a Little Shit, Nyctophobia, erasermic, Married Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Kirishima Eijirou Has Two Moms, Dabi is a Todoroki (My Hero Academia)

Language:

English

Collections:

Bullying a Bully to Teach Him Bullying is NEVER the Answer Except This One Time Apparently, MHA-brainrot™, Class 1A finds out bakugou bullied deku, that's a lotta damage, Gave me ideas, Favorite Bakugou Angst with a Dash of Fluff, Leo's Top Tier, rae keeping track of her BNHA fics?!?!?!? woah

Stats:

Published: 2021-04-11 Updated: 2022-05-25 Words: 133,573

Chapters: 10/?

The Loneliest

by [katsukis_superiority_complex](#)

Summary

Katsuki's world is turned upside down when he suddenly finds himself outcast by Class 1-A because Deku shares their past.

Notes

Hello and welcome! This is the first extensive thing I've written for BNHA and I'm hoping it makes sense because I tend to write non-linearly and stringing it all together it where I usually fail.

Anyway, I've included tags that cover the basis of the story and will update accordingly with each chapter. I'll also including warnings for each chapter.

Hope you enjoy it, feel free to leave a comment!

Humble Beginnings

Attending the prestigious Hero school that is UA, a place renowned for producing Top Heroes like All Might himself, would be a dream come true for any young wannabe Hero. From the moment Katsuki heard about it, about how the Number 1 Hero had studied there, about how he became the best and the strongest Hero... he just knew he had to go there too.

After years of hard work, of overcoming every obstacle and setback, to end up getting accepted with top marks in the entrance exams really was a dream come true for him.

But that was just the beginning, the next step was to keep working his ass off to become the Number 1 Hero. To be even better than All Might and the undisputable best Hero ever. He couldn't afford to slack off. A Hero who always wins, who always kicks ass and saves the day doesn't do things half measure and neither would Katsuki.

He had shown up on the first day ready to take on the challenge of the other potential Heroes. He'd been ready to wipe the floor with them as he continued his way to the top. But of course stupid fucking Deku had shown up, somehow flaunting a dangerously powerful Quirk, batting his lashes, and stammering so innocently it was near vomit inducing.

Looking back now, Katsuki should've known he didn't stand a chance. In less than a few hours Deku had the whole class wrapped around his (broken) fingers and Katsuki, despite feeling justified in his rage at being deceived for most of his life, was the bad guy. Again. As it always seemed to be whenever Deku was involved.

No matter how hard he tried to keep himself in check, Deku always found a way to bring out the worst in him. The reasons why were territory Katsuki wasn't willing to tread even now.

That was when it really hit him. This wasn't middle school anymore. There he could have raged and no one would have looked twice. In UA though, Aizawa alone looked about ready to expel him on the spot if he didn't calm down. A little angry shouting. That was all it took for the initially welcoming faces around him to turn cold.

No skin off his back.

Katsuki had never really been a people person anyway. People, they were complicated, and from experience he knew they always wanted something from you and they'd say just about anything to get it. Once they got it, whatever it was, once you'd outlived your usefulness you were nothing. Left behind and ignored. He had more than enough experience with that.

Despite what his actions may broadcast, from an early age he'd been a lone wolf. A chronic introvert. Or as his mother would always say, *a whiney little bitch*. Sue him but he rather preferred the silence and company of his own thoughts to being surrounded by liars and fakers. At least his own mind was honest more often than not.

For some reason they all flocked to him anyway. No matter what he did to keep them away, Deku especially, they kept coming back. It was his mother, *the Hag*, that had made it clear why.

It was his power. His Quirk that attracted them. That's how it was in the world with the powerful on top and the weak below them. If he wanted to be on top it meant being weak wasn't an option, not even a possibility for him. He had plenty of help figuring out what was unacceptable.

Power. An ability to lead and command. To win. Those qualities were why people flocked to All Might too, she told him, around all Heroes. So little 5 year old him listened to her and worked so hard to be just like them.

UA seemed to work in complete opposition to all he'd been taught. Shows of power just won him a scolding and unimpressed glares. Announcements of his goal and passion only got him vilified. Simply giving his all got him bound in chains and silenced.

Katsuki simply looked at it as nothing but an unfortunate series of momentary set backs. He had his sights set on the goal at the end of it all. He'd show them all, one way or another. And then, for once, *he'd* know the satisfaction of saying 'I told you so'.

Right up until the festival Katsuki spent most of his time alone and confused, but most of all just angry at himself for letting it get to him. He fumed at sitting third in the class but was more determined than ever to get to the top. More fuel was only added to that fiery rage at the fact that Deku was breaking bones left and right, not getting reprimanded, and was still coming out the winner.

The phone call's home only made him more bitter about it all, with the Hag acting as if everything was his fault. Like he was the reason Villains decided to target them that day. As if he'd been the one to volunteer to be chained up on national TV. Everyone who got hurt was hurt because he'd done or not done something. Like he should have known better giving everything he's ever done.

She was right of course, was always right when it came to knowing his shortcomings. That way he knew he just wasn't trying his best at all. He hadn't tried hard enough or been fast enough that day at the USJ. He hadn't been worthy of a good fight at the Festival. He still wasn't even close to being the best.

It was a few days after the Villain's attacked the USJ that a new nuisance entered his life. Kirishima Eijirou, whom he rightfully dubbed Shitty Hair (because his hair is shitty, and not at all like Katsuki's own no matter what the idiot argues!).

Before the USJ he was a distant echo in Katsuki's life. Another extra in the class who looked down on him for his less than stellar temperament. After it though...

Katsuki quickly came to learn that the red-head was nothing like the happy-go-lucky sort he projected, a bit dim perhaps, but he was smart where it counted. Wasn't bad in a fight either, had the enthusiasm and will power to keep trying so he had something going for him at least. He could respect that, but that was as far as he was willing to let it go... at first.

The guy was persistent. Overly enthusiastic about literally everything. He was like a bad smell that just wouldn't go away. He became like a second shadow to Katsuki, always asking questions or attempting conversation.

It started out simple. Easy to shut down or brush off.

"Why do you dislike Midoriya so much?"

"None of your business, Shitty Hair."

"How come I never see you at lunch? Where the hell do you go man?"

“None of your fucking business. Shitty Hair!”

Then slowly, Shitty Hair became more and more daring.

“Dude I’ve come up with cool nickname for you, yeah. Bakubro! Cool right?!”

“Fuck off. And don’t call me that!”

“You got it Bakubro!”

“I’ll fucking kill you, Shitty Hair!”

“Hey Bakubro, what... oh nevermind.”

“What?!”

“S’nothing.”

“Spit it out already, I hate that! You start something you should finish it!”

“There’s no point really. I already know how you’ll answer.”

“Oh yeah? Try me!”

“Yeah, you’ll say ‘None of your business, Shitty Hair!’”

“I don’t fucking sound like that!”

“Hell yeah you do!”

“I hate you!”

“No you don’t.”

Everywhere Katsuki went Shitty Hair followed. It was like being in elementary school again with a hyperactive stalker Deku around again except, somehow, less annoying, and yet still very annoying at the same time. It confused the shit out of him. Why was this asshole fucking around like this? Half the time Katsuki couldn’t tell if he was

being serious or taking the piss.

Still it wasn't completely intolerable. After a while it almost became endearing. Shitty Hair's persistence eventually won out. It was already too late by the time Katsuki grasped what was happening.

It was more of an instinctive path he walked to the cafeteria that day, Shitty Hair had very slyly convinced him to start joining him and then one day there was crowd. Horns, Sparky, Tape Dispenser all sat rather awkwardly that first day. But just like Shitty Hair they became a 'nuisance'. A nuisance he quickly got used to and before long it was more than just a group he ate lunch with, he would train with them and what started as just studying alone became a group affair.

They were always there. When he won and lost. They became a calming constant. Kept him balanced, to the point he couldn't remember how he ever managed before (a secret he kept to himself).

The Bakusquad, is what Horns had named it. Why they named it after him, he'd no clue but he found he wasn't even bothered by that, he didn't mind and instead felt... well, something. He wasn't about to address it.

He didn't think he'd ever get used to it though. The way they'd just approach him out of nowhere. Just walk right up, all smiles, and make him aware of whatever inane thoughts they were having while he pretended to only half-listen and then shouted his clear cut response. They looked past all the anger, all the snappy remarks and insults. They were able to discern the truth behind his words, exhume the veiled compliments like expert archaeologists. He didn't get how they knew, practically no one could; his own parents failed on that front. Deku had a lifetime of experience and several notebooks filled and couldn't seem to get him. But *they* understood.

It was refreshing.

Even when Katsuki had made one hell of an impression on everyone at Sports Festival, his meagre reputation plummeting before even having much chance to take off. The Bakusquad... they didn't change at all. They persisted with their chatter, their stupid questions, and inane ploys to get have him 'hang out' more often. They didn't seem to notice the piercing glares or hear the loud whispers and if they did they didn't bring attention to it. Only directed his attention elsewhere.

He'd never say it but he was grateful that he had friends like them. Because that's what they were right... friends? People who look out

for each other and (dare he even think it) *enjoy* each other's company. Who can annoy each other to death but who would do anything for each other too? People who were there when you needed them. A typical textbook definition of a friend. They seemed as much. So he let himself hope. He'd never ask but sooner or later they'd mention it, they had to. Either way he'd have an answer.

Yet still there were days where even their bright bubble couldn't save him from the thoughts in his own head. He was never free of the criticism, not while he was capable of thought and lived where he did. What plagued him at home followed him to school, and what plagued him at school didn't feel much different from home. He felt like a literal ticking timebomb, waiting for that one little thing that would set him off. Set him off and have his little dream world come crashing down. He knew the foundations were weak so it wouldn't take much.

Beyond his new friends, the only thing he found stopping him from going full rage mode at Deku or anyone was the watchful eye of his Teachers. Aizawa in particular. His homeroom teacher had made it clear his overly aggressive behaviour wouldn't be tolerated, but he'd also pointed out the great potential Katsuki had too.

Katsuki respected him.

The Hero and Sensei knew how to be direct while being lenient and Katsuki appreciated the guidance, even if it was challenging to follow. However with so much contradicting information weighing on him he wasn't sure what was the best route for him anymore. Not like he wasn't up for the challenge, this was a problem he'd be battling his whole life. If after sixteen years he hadn't figured it out he wasn't sure he ever would. But the threat of expulsion was a good motivator and that wasn't even bringing into account what the Hag would do if she ever got wind of it.

He just kept his head down. His grades up. And tried his damned hardest to meet his own unreachable standards in the hopes of maybe having a chance at meeting everyone's expectations of him too.

It would get better, easier, it had to. Life was full of highs and lows, this low was just lasting a little longer than any before.

Today was not going well. He'd slept through his alarm (for the first time in years), he's pretty sure he fucked up some of the most simple questions on the written exam that morning too. He still passed sure, but it wouldn't be the perfect score he wanted needed. The worst part was that he knew the shit, he worked his butt off studying the first term curriculum back and front, he knew it but his brain just wouldn't cooperate. There wasn't even a valid reason for it.

You're obviously tired as fuck! The voice in his head screamed. Wrong he argued with himself. He'd overslept so being tired couldn't have anything to do with it.

Whatever the reason what's done is done. Everyone had off days though right? Katsuki was just really wishing it had been any other day.

The physical. Ha! Nothing could have prepared him for that shitstorm. He'd passed apparently, not that he'd counted being unconscious as a win. If he'd been paired with anyone else, (anyone at all!) it could have gone his way. Heck, he could have done it without the Nerd's 'help'. He was sure of it.

The practical itself wasn't difficult. A simple escape or capture scenario. Being pitted against All Might, *the* Number 1 Hero, was tough, he didn't expect it be any less so. You don't get to be Number 1 by being a pushover. He'd face anything. It wasn't hard figuring out what to do, what had been hard was trying to get through it with bloody Deku as a partner. Stupid fucking Nerd, second guessing him at every turn, not even giving a second to listen to him, whining in his ear that they should run and not even try to fight. It became very clear very fast, neither of their plans were going to work.

With minutes to spare they compromised and made it. So, yeah, maybe Katsuki had gotten a little too into the whole 'I'll win on his own' mentality. All Might too if you asked him. Fucking Deku had to carry his unconscious ass across the finish line because the Pro had grown overzealous in taking on the Villain role (like Four Eyes back at the start of the year only way more destructive). But they won. It wasn't his victory though.

Waking up hours later in the Infirmary, that win felt like nothing short of a failure. He wanted absolute victory. Not... not whatever this was.

S

He didn't get it. Tape Dispenser had been K.O'd too. He'd failed, and

yet somehow Katsuki had passed? Talk about double standards! Or maybe they were going easy on him because of what happened at the Festival? The Hag made him aware of how that had affected their business. Had made most of the UA faculty aware too. Fucking bullshit! How was he ever supposed to show people he could be best if they kept treating him with kid gloves?

It was too much to hope that the day would get even a fraction of little better after that.

The school day had long ended. With a still pounding headache (despite Recovery Girls' best efforts and several hours of rest) Katsuki slowly made his way down the now empty corridors. As much as he knew his old Hag would flip out at him getting home late, he wasn't in any rush to get there. No doubt she'd already received a phone call from the school. Whether it was from Aizawa, All Might or Recovery Girl herself, hell even the freaking Principal, the end result would be the same.

He dragged his feet recounting the number of times he'd fucked up today. Mentally tallying the errors and calculating the work he'd need to do to make up for it all. The mounting pile was daunting and he was so exhausted the thought of it only made his head ache worse.

He wanted to be alone, the silence let him think. It was a haven amid the chaos he was usually surrounded by. The quiet wasn't the best thing for him but it's not like he expected anyone to wait around for him.

"Bakugou."

Katsuki paused, but not long enough to stop. Not the voice he'd been expecting, nor one he'd ever wanted to hear in this kind of situation. He didn't have to turn to confirm it was Todoroki. The annoying, monotone voice was obnoxiously distinct and familiar.

The only thought occupying his head right now was *why the hell was the Candy Cane fucker still here?*

Katsuki didn't bother with the niceties of looking his way or even slowing his already chill pace. Todoroki, however, didn't have to try hard to catch up pitting himself in his way and blocking the path. Katsuki glared into two toned eyes, one glistening blue and the other a cool grey, both expressing little to no emotion except for a hint something heated. Katsuki couldn't help but hope it was concern, however muted. Fact chance. In those eyes, he'd only ever found

something that made him feel like he should be ready for battle.

Today, for once, Katsuki was tired of fighting.

“What?!” he groaned. When Todoroki just continued to glare in silence, he had to grit his teeth to stay quiet.

He knew better than to lash out at something as petty as this, especially in the school halls where he’d been reminded time and time again played host to a myriad of CCTV. He had enough problems to deal with. Katsuki really didn’t have the desire or want for anything else to get stacked on the already ample fallback of his time at UA thus far. Giving someone a chance to see or overhear yet another outburst was not on his to do list.

The silence lingered. Not being in a rush to be anywhere, Katsuki still couldn’t help the impatience festering in his mind. That, and the need to know what the ever living fuck this idiot wanted from him. Had to be important if he waited for him.

“If you’ve got something to say, the spit it out already Half-and-Half! I’ve got somewhere to be!” Katsuki lied, doubling down on his glare. He puffed his chest and stood a little straighter, anything to level out the few inches of height advantage Todoroki had. His fists tightened in his pocket so much he could feel the ragged edges of chewed nails stabbing into his palms. Just a little more and the skin might break. Just the thought alone was enough to keep him calm. So far this method of bottling it up, of holding it in stopped him from getting physical straight off the bat. But he knew all too well, it wasn’t fool proof and nowhere near a guaranteed option. Any longer and he was going to break.

He just needed it to happen away from here.

Todoroki straightened too, only adding to the height he had on Katsuki. The Recommendation Student looked down on him, quite literally. His expression unchanging and tone still unfeeling as he spoke, curt and direct.

“Stay away from Midoriya.”

Katsuki felt the impending anger get swept up in the tide of confusion. That was... not what he’d been expecting. He’s not really sure what he had been expecting but it wasn’t... that. Was this because he punched the Nerd earlier during the practical? Deku’s little squad of friends did seem like the over protective types, so maybe. Who was he kidding, of

course that was it, what else?

As Katsuki mused, Todoroki loomed over him. Katsuki stood unwavering at the pitiful display. He scoffed.

“You say that like I’m trying to fuck with him.”

“Seems like it. So just *stay away* from now on.” Todoroki reimposed.

Katsuki snarled. His teeth bared, just like always when it involved Deku, anger was his only response. His voice raised, and was a barely contained yell, “Fuck off. Don’t think you can tell me what to do! *You* should be telling the Nerd to stay away from me! Asshole never could get the message!”

It’s not like he’d been asked to be paired with stupid Deku. Not like he’d wanted to be anywhere near him ever at all. The feeling of anxiety that would swell in his chest just looking at Deku was nearly too much to bear half the time. Not that he’d ever let anyone know that. They’d likely use it against him. Deku was the only one who knew, the only one who could, but didn’t, do anything about it.

No, him constantly getting paired with the Nerd, that was all the universe’s idea of a joke. Or just Aizawa. Guy had a weird vendetta or something. Seemed to like watching the two of them at each other’s throats. A maddening experiment to see how far they could be pushed until they both gave in. And Deku always following him around like a lost soul... that was all Deku. And everything that resulted from that? Well, that was just life’s way of constantly screaming *fuck you* at him.

Besides, the exam hadn’t even been that bad. Katsuki thinks he handled it rather well all things considered. Sure, he’d yelled, but Deku yelled back just as much. It was their weird way of communicating. They had a rocky start but once they compromised, dare he say it, they worked well together. He could begrudgingly admit they weren’t the worst team in the world. Almost like when they were kids again...

Still, that didn’t mean he was going to rush out to find Deku again any time soon, or even hope to be teamed up with him again. Not on purpose anyway.

As much as Katsuki would love to scream at him and try to work some sense into this thick head, he wasn’t about to go out of his way to do it. In fact, only for the Nerd sitting behind him in class and conveniently getting the same train route on the daily, he wouldn’t go

within a 10 foot radius of bloody Deku.

Deku was a magnet for trouble and despite his current reputation, the last thing Katsuki wanted was trouble.

But no. No matter how hard he tries or wishes, it'll never go his way.

Katsuki knows better. He's been learning it the hard way for years now, he won't get anything he wants. Not without fighting for it. Not without giving up a piece of himself.

Instead of explaining it all like a rational person, Katsuki grins, wide and false. Something as twisted as the knots in his stomach.

"You the Nerd's guard Dog now? Huh? Errand boy Icy Hot?" Katsuki tries to gain ground but Todoroki stands firm. "Suits you..."

Todoroki's empty gaze ices over even more. The chill sent up Katsuki's spine sending warning alarms to his brain. His palms start to sweat in response and the urge pop off the excess makes his palms itch.

"I know what you did to him." Todoroki interrupts his thoughts. His bland tone somehow more deadly, lethal, his stare never wavering. The asshole takes advantage of the stunned pause carries on, stepping closer to Katsuki as he does. Katsuki is loath to admit he takes a step back. "I know because he told me. Told me everything, every punch, every burn. Every *word*. If you even look like you're going to touch him or even speak to him again, I won't let you get away with it like he did."

Katsuki narrowed his glare. His body had already betrayed him, backing off as the Icy Hot extra approached him. Had already given the affirmation Todoroki was looking for. Katsuki wasn't about to let him think he'd won. He's knows its fruitless, he can feel the defeat his bones, doesn't doubt its showing in his posture but he tries anyway. God does love a tryer after all.

"You don't know a fucking thing, asshole."

Todoroki continued to stare him down. Katsuki's feeling smaller with every passing millisecond. "Just stay away from him. Or else."

With that, Katsuki watched him turn and walk away. He Itched to shout out at him, but his throat tightened, holding his tongue firmly. Only when white and red disappeared around the corner was he finally able to take a breath. The entire interaction left him feeling

sour, eager even to get out and get home. All he wanted to do was punch something.

It wasn't until he was outside the school walls that he punched the nearest tree splitting the knuckles of his right hand. At least he hadn't punched Candy Cane.

Fucking Deku. He'd thought they'd had an unspoken mutual understanding. That all that shit was in the past. That it was between them and no one else. Apparently not. Thinking so highly of the Nerd's Hero complex was going to be his downfall.

Katsuki had yet to formally apologise for everything, he was working up to it though. Slow and steady. But it was hard. Where did he start with something like that, and without sounding like he was being facetious? Fucking impossible given his reputation. *Sorry* just wasn't part of his everyday vocabulary. A small, petty part of him was still waiting for Deku to apologise first. For lying about his Quirk this whole time.

It was fine. It was just Icy Hot. His Quirk might pack a punch and he may be above him with regards to grades, but he was lacking in common sense. He also didn't strike Katsuki as the kind of person who would share things unnecessarily. He was only looking out for the Nerd after all.

Suppressing a growl and trying his best to ignore the nausea burning the back of his throat he stormed down the streets. The journey home was a pleasant blur.

Domino Effect

Chapter Summary

It's a new day and Katsuki is just hoping to get through it in one piece.

Chapter Notes

Wow! The response on chapter 1 was way better than I'd hoped! Thank you everyone who read, left kudos or a comment! Really got me fired up to get this update on sooner than I'd planned. (There's no real schedule, just when I happen to finish a chapter)

I've rewritten this one like three times, and i'm not sure it'll ever get any better. I had planned for some of this to happen next chapter but then thought nah, lets get straight to it.

Also, Happy Birthday Katsuki!!! I think I'm late by about 2hours but hey, better late than never.

Warnings for lot's of swearing and canon-typical violence. Nothing too crazy.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sitting in Homeroom the next morning, Katsuki was bombarded with the constant throbbing of a bad headache. No doubt still lingering from yesterday.

He spent the train ride working at his temples which was difficult when his wrists still ached from all the over exertion too. Not to mention the cramped carriage, filled from end to end with day shift workers, made it difficult to move at all. It was rare that he'd find himself pining for the weekend but given the circumstances, he allowed the thought all of three seconds to exist before promptly wiping it from existence. He was going to be Number 1 he didn't have time to waste.

He was exhausted. He'd slept yes, but not well or for long; when he woke his cheeks were tight and sticky from tears that had dried there. He didn't even remember crying or what he'd been crying about.

Pathetic really. It had been a common occurrence right after the Sludge Villain attack, had died down to once in a blue moon. Why

now? He had a few ideas. One being the stress of getting the Final Exam results. The other being a certain nosey, red and white haired asshole prying into business that didn't involve him.

It was funny how no matter what there was always something on his plate these days. If it wasn't the Hag it was School related. It neither of those it could literally be anything else! He would laugh out loud if he didn't have the worry of appearing manic in the streets as he walked his way to class.

He was almost late, again. Stupid alarm clock needs replacing probably. He supposes it can only get thrown at the wall so many times before it gives up.

Showing up well past his usual time earned him some odd looks since he was usually one of the first four in the room each day without fail. He was really past the point of caring. He let them stare, warning off anyone stupid enough to get too close with an intense glare. His grouchiness was at an all-time high today (record breaking) and by this point in the year all his classmates knew to give him a wide berth.

Well, almost all of them.

Sat at his desk, Katsuki got his notebook and pencil out before resting on his arms, just trying to temper his mind into something resembling quiet for a few minutes. God, headaches sucked.

"Oi! Bakubro! Can't believe I got in before you! That's two days in a row, everything okay man?" Kirishima burst into his bubble with a smile so wide it looked like it should be impossible. Katsuki huffed as he sat up and massaged the side of his head.

"Been doing extra endurance training, Shitty Hair." The sour taste of a lie faded quickly as he thought himself through it. It's not a lie, he supposes he could call what his mum does endurance training. Of sorts. When she'd first started he'd be a mess after seconds, now he can handle it for a lot longer.

"Was that wise with the exams yesterday *and* health checks tomorrow? What if they make you sit out because you... I don't know... pulled a muscle?"

Katsuki suppressed the smile aching to burn through, masking it instead with a deceptive scowl. "Tch. I wouldn't make a rookie mistake like that! You're just hoping they have an excuse to make me sit out of the camp with you idiots."

Kirishima's cheeks reddened, becoming a close match for his spiky hair. Ah yes, there it was. The thing he wanted. His friend comes to kneel beside his desk. "No, no way bro! I just... um... yeah, I guess. But not in a bad way! I have a feeling Aizawa will assign us *Failures* like 50 essays or something over the break! Like, classes and stuff only really make sense when you're there to explain them after the fact! And essays are just impossible!"

As Kirishima laughs, rubbing nervously at the back of his neck, Katsuki can't help the swelling of pride at that statement. A part of him wants to get it in writing. *See Hag, I'm not wasting everyone's time.* Instead he rolls his notebook and lightly bonks him on the head. The red head balks making sure his *shitty* spikes are still in place. Acid rain couldn't melt those gelled peaks.

"Tch. You know you guys aren't as stupid as you think." He couldn't find the words to express just how annoying their lack of self-confidence was when it came to academics. He didn't want to mention practical stuff after yesterday. Keeping it simple was a tried and tested way of getting the point across and getting snappy felt like too much effort.

"Aw, so kind!" Kaminari chimed in, having crept up behind Kirishima. The electric blond slung an arm over Kirishima's shoulder and cooed. Katsuki was instantly regretting letting that calm tone slip out.

"What is?" Sero quipped, merely leaning over his desk from the next row over, "Certainly not *Bakugou?!'*"

"He said we're not stupid!" Kaminari repeated matching the incredulous tone, swiping a fake tear from his eyes.

"Aw Blasty? Really?" chimed Ashido, from her place across the room. Seconds later she had joined them.

"You know that's not what I said Sparkplug! You know what, I take it back, you're all morons!" Katsuki snapped as they carried on with the baby voices and laughed playfully. He may be rough around the edges. He may avoid social interaction like the plague when he can, but he's not heartless like they all seem to think. Just because he's the best doesn't mean everyone else is automatically shit. Some people yes, but not everyone.

The Bakusquad carried on joking, speculating what the powers that be were planning with a *Nice* Bakugou in the world. Or how long they had left with the Body Snatchers now in town.

“Fuck off already!” he yelled, popping off a few small sparks ignoring the quiet pain telling him to stop.

Kirishima had shimmied around to make room for the growing crowd. His body leaning over the front of the blonds desk practically begging him. “But seriously, bro, you’ll review all this stuff with us yeah? I don’t think I would have passed the written exams if you hadn’t been the one tutoring me!”

Katsuki shook his head at them all.

“I wasn’t the one who learned it all and did the test for you!” he retorted poking him in the forehead for good measure.

“What is going on?! That’s two compliments in the space of as many minutes?!” Mina cried. “Are you sick? Do you have a fever?! Did you really get body swapped?!” She darted forward raising her palm to his forehead, a sudden movement that Katsuki couldn’t help but flinch at. He cursed himself.

Fuck.

“Huh?! Kacchan’s sick?”

Fucking trust Deku to be eavesdropping. But also thank fuck for Deku eavesdropping because now he had an out for not explaining why he backed off like that at literally nothing.

“Fuck off Deku!” he screams. Katsuki turns sending him a death glare that promptly has the Nerd burying his head back into his notebook with a squeaked apology. The rapid motion doesn’t help his headache at all.

He's gripping his head again, and the concern is almost palpable from his Squad. The sudden chill in the air carried a silent warning meant only for him.

“Calm it Blasty, he’s just looking out for you. Though you do look a bit peaky today.” Ashido says smiling at Deku and then him. There’s a mild look of concern on her features and Katsuki doesn’t like it one bit. Too much like Pity.

“Tch. Whatever. I’m not sick, you guys are just annoying.” He folds his arms over his chest to show he’s done with this topic.

“Sure, sure. Whatever you say, Bakubro!” Ashido sang.

He was about to snap back at her, but they didn't get a chance to carry on their little chat when Aizawa strolled in seconds later. The man simply clearing his throat was enough to have them all scrambling to their seats and quick to silence. It was amazing, how a Hero's presence was able to demand such obedience. The only difference between now and day one, was the obvious absence of a notable yellow sleeping bag. The panda eyes on the Hero were just as impressive and Katsuki could actually sympathise, for once, with the tired look on his face.

"Right. Good Morning. First off. Well done on your performance during the exams yesterday. Everyone passed the written tests, and if you didn't pass the practical don't worry. You'll have plenty of opportunity to improve."

The board behind him flickers with their Rankings. Combined scores across both exams. Katsuki seethes at still sitting in third. If he'd not been so flustered or made so many stupid mistakes he knows he could have been up top. The pencil in his hand steams from the building heat around it; the yellow finish charred black. His only rejoice is seeing he's sitting higher than both Deku *and* Icy Hot. A small reprieve given everything else going on with the bastards.

No use dwelling on it. He'll just have to make sure he's extra prepared for the next exams. Like Aizawa just told them, there'll be opportunities and time to improve. Always time to improve.

There was a collective sigh of relief, but a quick glance around and Katsuki could see the tension in the shoulders of his Squad, Sato too. It went without saying that they were disappointed in themselves for not doing better. Katsuki could empathise on that front, though for vastly different reasons he guessed. He was cursing himself for not doing his best at every possible turn. For having forced himself to rely on someone else. They were probably more disappointed they'd not be joining them at the camp and nothing more.

"You'll be glad to know that an opportunity will come sooner than you thought. At the Training camp in fact. There you'll be joining the rest of your classmates..."

The resounding chorus from the idiots was enlightening. Kaminari literally leapt in his seat, whooping, and punching the air. Damn Sensei and his '*logical deceptions*'. If he didn't have so much respect for the man he'd hate him for all the convenient lies.

“... and taking extra classes.”

The celebrating died as quick as it started. Kaminari slumped like a deflated balloon over his desk, Kirishima patting his back having already accepted his fate. Katsuki dipped his head to hide his smirk at the shock on their faces.

Their homeroom teacher was quick to carry on, brushing over the topic like it wasn't a big deal, which he supposes for the Hero is the truth. He's never been one to linger, always moving to the next thing. Katsuki liked it. Fast paced. No bullshit. Consistent.

“You all know the times for your check-ups tomorrow?”

“Yes, Sensei.” They all chimed together, an enthusiastic echo of affirmation.

“Good. There aren't any scheduled classes this morning, so get changed into your gym gear and head to Gym Gamma. Take it easy today, no Quirks. Understand. I'll be there to supervise.”

The dark haired Hero made a quick exit, Katsuki had no doubt the man was rushing off to get a coffee he looked like he could use one. The class was quick to follow him. Their collective hustle and bustle faded away out of the class room as they left. Though Katsuki lingered behind not bothered in the least that the ‘Squad’ went on without him. They knew well enough to give him space when he was grouchy.

He planned on taking his Sensei's words to heart today. Taking it so easy on his way, that he may as well have been sleep walking. He wasn't normally one for lazing away the day in bed, couldn't actually recall ever doing it, but the build-up of Villain attacks, public humiliation, near-failures, and Todoroki's revelation had him overthinking and dead on the inside. The silence of sleep seemed like the only escape.

Then again...

Take it easy? How can he really do that when he spent pretty much all his time floundering yesterday? Aching in his head or not, he had to keep pushing. Needed to up his game. Needed to reach that point where he didn't have to rely on anybody, because he was the best. He tried not to think too hard, the act only making his head hurt worse. Taking it easy wasn't an option for him but he'd dial it back just a fraction today. He'd rest properly when he was dead.

Power walking the rest of the way to the locker room made his journey quick. The boys room was filled with amicable chatter and the stink of teenage testosterone. Katsuki rolled his eyes at Kaminari, who was still complaining; only now, instead of his voicing annoyance at not going to the camp, he was moaning about having extra classes. The guy wouldn't be happy in heaven.

As usual the boys had split off into groups dotted about the room, close friend sticking close and the quieter types alone; but everyone who cared enough joined in the conversation. Not Katsuki, he was too busy thinking about what to train on today. He recalled his *lie* earlier, perhaps some endurance training to back it up wouldn't hurt.

Unfortunately for Katsuki, the only free space among the benches is beside Deku. A flurry of anxiety flared as he made his way over though he succeeded in appearing completely unfazed. Not like he was set on adhering to Todoroki's requests, he wasn't about to let anyone tell him what do. He was keen to stay away but life (and Deku) made it... difficult.

Right now he had no choice. The half-and-half had better understand he's not doing this deliberately. He almost laughed, as if anyone on Deku's side would take the time to understand anything.

He pulled out his gym clothes and began to get changed.

It was hard, given the proximity to ignore the Greenette beside him. Especially when he whipped his shirt off. The strong smell of the mint bodywash the Nerd had been using for since nursery wasn't the only thing drawing his attention. Begrudgingly silent praise filled his head. The Nerd really had buffed up since Middle School. He'd never really taken the time to notice before. He had to wonder who had trained him, or (if it was no one) where he found such an effective routine to make such boundless leaps in a short time.

Katsuki had worked years to get to his own level of mastery. Literal years he'd spent carving his physique to optimize using his Quirk. His parents had insisted on specialist classes so he could effectively make us of every aspect of it. On one hand that was to benefit him but it also mainly served to stop him blowing up the furniture at home.

It had only been a little over a Year since Deku had become more and more scarce, always rushing off to who knows where. Made sense that he'd been training all that time. Preparing for the in your face moment when he finally showed off his Quirk.

Slowly the boys filed out, one by one or in their groups, their conversations disappearing with them. Katsuki took his time, it wasn't until the room was close to vacant, only a few stragglers left, when he was sitting lacing up the long laces on his boots, that the idiot Nerd beside him decided to strike up conversation.

"How's your head Kacchan?"

Katsuki forced himself to not snap back right away, only took a breath and focused on the rhythmic scratching noise as he laced his boots.

"I told you earlier. It's none of your business, Nerd." He kept his voice low and steady.

There was an awkward chuckle beside him that coaxed him to look up. Deku was bashful as ever, eyes glistening with worry and fire of determination faintly hidden behind it. Katsuki was quick to turn back to lace the other boot.

"It's just that... well, you were still out cold when I left yesterday. And I noticed you've been rubbing at your head all morning. Maybe you should go to recovery girl again?" the Nerd rambled on.

Katsuki shook his head dismissively, tying off the final knot and stood, getting as close to face-to-face as head could. He cursed the damned growth spurt Deku had undergone in the last few months. Even he was looking down on him now. Maybe All Might nearly snapping his spine had worked in his favour yesterday and added a few extra inches too. Or more likely, as he only just noticed, it was because the Nerd was simply standing taller.

"Piss off Deku! Mind your own fucking business."

If he could trust anyone to notice the tiniest different in his mannerisms of course it would be fucking Deku. He wasn't in the mood to get overly defensive, didn't have the energy to spare. Only for the fact that he wanted to keep up appearances he'd do nothing. But the usual, cursing, popping off a few small blasts. His head throbbed at the thought, so instead he shoved past him, digging his shoulder, and ignoring the straight up glare Todoroki was directing at him from behind them. He refused to acknowledge that asshole right now.

Out in the gym was no different. He kept to himself. Took up residence in a secluded corner and started stretching out his muscles. By the time he was done the twinge in his wrists and shoulders was all

but gone. The headache a distant memory. Funny how working himself up relaxed him more than the searing shower he'd squeezed in that morning.

He'd finally reached a place of zen, ready to do set off in a jog around the hall when a body collided with him.

His relaxed stature was blown away the second he registered the touch and was replaced with an indescribable rage when he landed on the ground. Gym mat or not, it hurt like a bitch. Imagine his unsurprise when a mop of unruly green hair struggles to untangle itself from him and gets in his face, muttering apologies.

Bloody Deku!

It's purely instinctive how he reacts, startling to his feet and grabbing the collar of Deku's shirt hoisting him up with him. Like so many times before, the Nerd's eyes are wide with surprise. Green encompasses the whole world for a split second and Katsuki has to wonder why he's so angry when the Nerd assures him it was an accident. He's ready to tell him to fuck off for the umpteenth time, but it all vanishes when the throbbing headache returns with a vengeance, the ache in his shoulders and wrists too. He pushes Deku back with the smallest of explosions. It's not intentional but the Nerd is stumbling over nothing before he falls to the ground.

Everyone's watching. And it makes him panic. Only briefly.

"Fucking watch it, Deku!" he growls, only from discomfort but to the untrained ear it sounds like a threat. He rubs at his temple, the severe grimace on his face warning everyone off.

"Oi, Bakugou! You okay?!" Kirishima is the first of his own Squad on the scene. Katsuki waves him off. He's fine, he doesn't need their help or their concern.

His headache was no longer an easily ignorable thrum and it gets a whole lot worse when seconds later a fist connects with the side of his face. It all couldn't have happened in any more than a few seconds or less. One moment he was standing the next he was skidding across the gym floor with an icy chill spreading across his cheek in place of the heated pain he was used to. His own breath a distant fog before his eyes.

It was only for a moment that he allowed himself to stay there stunned. Glancing back he saw exactly what he expected to see. Icy

Hot staring down at him, face stoic as usual but his eyes a flaming inferno that screamed at him, daring him to make another move. Uraraka and Iida are helping Deku to his feet. Everyone else was just watching on with curious stares. Shitty Hair looked gobsmacked.

“Woah, Todoroki, chill man!” the redhead said by way of placating him.

Katsuki brushed himself off as he stood. Rubbing at his aching jaw he allowed a smirk to spread on his lips. That wasn’t a bad right hook. Todoroki had always seemed like the type to use his Quirk a 100% all the time. History would say it was true too. It was almost enlightening to know the guy had it in him to get physical. The few minutes they’d sparred during the Festival had left him wanting and thoroughly unimpressed with the Number 2 Hero’s son. Also thoroughly enraged and looked down on but that was secondary now.

Deku was trying to get Uraraka to lay off with the over attentive fussing. The Nerd wasn’t as soft as everyone thought he was. Dude was breaking bones every other day now, did so with the conviction of a madman half the time. Not to mention... everything else he’d been through.

“I’m fine, really. Thank you, Uraraka.” Deku assured her. The Nerd looked over at the tense stare off between his ‘Kacchan’ and Todoroki.

“Yeah, the Nerd’s fine, Round Cheeks. It’s nothing he can’t handle.”

Apparently that was the entirely wrong thing to say, when a rush of ice charges at him. He barely had a second to dodge.

“Todoroki-kun!” Deku cried only held back by Iida. For a Class President he wasn’t doing a very good job of keeping Todoroki in line. Unless... did he know too? Did Deku? Or Todoroki...?

Don’t think about that right now. Focus!

“The hell, Icy Hot?!” Katsuki glared at him. This asshole was asking for it. “What happened to no Quirks, huh?”

“I warned you.” Is all Todoroki says before more ice is rushing towards him. A flurry of snowflakes blasts up nearly blinding him.

Katsuki blasts backwards and up out of harm’s way, he can see clearly from up here. Several blasts later he’s landing and his wrists are aching worse than before. *Fucking hell.* He needed to end this quickly

and decisively. He knew he shouldn't buy in, shouldn't rise to him. But the thought that maybe this would bring him some much needed satisfaction that he'd been craving since the Festival has him charging.

He shot forward, explosions small, controlled and just powerful enough boosting him. "Bring it Candy Cane!"

"Bakubro don't!" several voices shout pleadingly.

"Seriously? Do even know anyone's name Bakugou?!" Uraraka scoffed from the side-lines.

Katsuki didn't have time to roll his eyes at her comment, barrelling towards his target at this speed didn't afford him much time for things like that. But he did, he knew all their names. Some small part of him thought it was more impactful using a nickname. Apparently not.

But being only moments from impact he couldn't say all that, he needed to stay focused. Candy Cane himself looked ready to bring down the building. He was about to send out a stun grenade shot as he ran, but nothing came. There was a distinct absence of the internal heat and trigger he used to ignite his sweat and he knew he was in shit, even before he both feet landed on the ground again and he came to a standstill.

"Bakugou!" came Aizawa's scolding tone. He'd let himself flinch only for the audience.

He turned to his homeroom teacher, the man's long raven hair floating about his head and eyes glowing red like a demon. His Sensei turned and walked to the gym entrance, no further words needed as Katsuki made to follow him. Sending one last threatening glare to Todoroki, who had conveniently rid all evidence of his involvement. His classmate met his gaze with a triumphant stare. Katsuki scoffed and quickly looked away, set his sights ahead and didn't look back.

The fact that he may have kicked the door open with a little too much force wasn't going to help his case.

"Care to explain." Aizawa prompted the second the door closed behind them. He was much calmer now, his hair dropping and his dry eyes thoroughly soaked with eyedrops. "I believed I said no Quirks. To take it easy."

Katsuki paused, how could he explain this without sounding like a pouty child. *He started it.* His mind supplies. Yeah, not helping on the

not sounding childish front. He sighed, shoved his fists in his pockets. He couldn't bring himself to make eye contact but settled for glaring at the capture weapon around his Sensei's neck instead. It looked soft but he knew from experience how tough it could be.

"It was nothing."

"Didn't look like nothing." Aizawa sighed. "I'm not going to go through the whole speech again, but any more of this behaviour and more serious action will have to be taken, Bakugou. I've told you before, cooperation will be one of your greatest assets as a Hero in the field. Starting fights is not a way to nurture it. Understand?"

I didn't start it, he quietly complains. Or did he? He's not sure anymore. He supposes if he pushed Deku then he did but... agh, his head was hurting again. Katsuki nodded instead, grimacing at the motion.

"Alright. Good. Get to Recovery Girl, looks like Todoroki got in a good hit."

"I guess." Katsuki tentatively agreed, brushing his cheek, and wincing at the spark of pain. *A cheap shot, though admittedly effective.*

Aizawa scoffed. When he looked up his Teacher was... almost smiling, albeit feint and barely noticeable it was there. An odd look if ever he'd seen one.

"What?!"

Aizawa rolled his tired eyes, "Nothing, Problem Child. On you go. *Don't* start anymore fights today."

Katsuki frowned as the man disappeared back inside the gym. Never one to (deliberately) disappoint, he made his way to Recovery Girl.

*

Recovery Girl was quick with her healing. Rushed off her feet with Class 1-B's Health checks, but she managed to spare a few minutes for him. He really didn't need it though, but she had insisted. However disgusting the sensation of the woman's lips were, he was grateful that

he'd not argued further. His headache was finally history, his shoulders, and wrists at ease. Even Todoroki's punch wasn't a blip on the pain radar anymore. The Old Hero had sent him off with a lollipop and a request to not show up again anytime shown. She only frowned when he reminded her of his own Classes check-ups the next day.

He took his sweet, sweet time, getting back to the locker room, taking a quick cold shower, and changing back into his uniform. Relished the silence and tried not to think about what happened. But he thought anyway.

Todoroki was serious about his backing up his *warning* then. Katsuki had no clue what he was expecting from him. He was trying as it was to keep his distance. Did he really expect him to completely change overnight? Was he expecting to say his piece and have everything be sunshine and fucking rainbows? How naïve can you get?!

So long as Deku had freewill to do and say as he pleased this would always happen. So long as Deku felt the need to butt in, Katsuki was always going to get defensive. It was hard to avoid someone that was deadset on always being there.

He returned to Homeroom and spent the few minutes he had left alone preparing for the afternoon classes; step one being that he disposed of his charred pencil.

When the bell for lunch finally rang, Katsuki was up again like a shot and on his way to the cafeteria as normal. Despite having his stamina drained to heal him he was buzzing. And Hungry. He hadn't had time for breakfast, what with 'sleeping' in and all. Not to mention the small meal he had last night was hardly enough to feed someone even half his age, something he was unfortunately used to.

He grabbed a portion of *warm* curry rice and seized the Bakusquad's usual table in a secluded corner by the cafeteria entrance; something he insisted was done purely out of habit rather than any real desire to share the unique space with them even though it was obvious to them. They weren't afraid to call him out on it either.

The Squad took their time joining him, probably spent their time jabbering away in the changing rooms, and when they did arrive they came baring strange looks and muttering whispers. Different whispers from the ones he was used to. Usually people intended for him to overhear but they kept it between themselves.

He ignored it at first, they were probably just still mad they were

going to have to do extra classes during the camp because they didn't pass the mid-terms. Rightly so in Sero's case. Unfair Katsuki thought. Even he'd be a little peeved at that injustice. Especially when Katsuki should really be joining them too.

As the lunch hour carried on, their conversation remained hushed and not as lively as he was used to. Not to mention they hadn't even greeted him. Not a single acknowledgment.

Now, Katsuki wasn't usually petty about such things, but he felt about to burst. They seemed like they had something to say, or maybe ask, but couldn't muster the courage. They were tiptoeing around him. Hell, even Kirishima, the most chill person he knew was acting stand offish; hadn't even looked at him once since sitting down.

The paranoid part of him had a feeling Icy Hot had something to do with it. The Hopeful part hoped not.

Katsuki was trying his best to ignore the Icy asshole but curiosity had his eyes listing. Even now, while everyone was eating and chatting, the guy was staring him out from across the room. Almost like he was waiting for something to happen. Then again, he might just be staring into space, coincidently in Katsuki's direction. Right?

The stress of not knowing, of being a step behind murdered his appetite, and after barely half a dozen mouthfuls of his lunch he dropped his spoon.

"The fuck is with you idiots? Still being all pissy because you have extra classes now?" Katsuki finished with a teasing grin, an attempt to ease the mood. Break the ice and get back to what he'd come accustomed to from them. Though his loudness shocked them from whatever collective daydream they were stuck in, the way they all avoided his eyes and remained silent only amped up his anxiety.

Katsuki looked across at Kirishima. If anyone could save this it would be him. The red head was always good at carrying a conversation. Not this time. He was clutching his lunch tray, his own meal barely touched. It was as if he were ready to get up and go.

Did I say something wrong? Do something? Because of what happened in the gym? He wondered.

There was no explanation he could think of that didn't involve him fucking up in some way. When things went to shit it was always his fault in some round about way. Shitty Hair looked like he was battling

with himself, like he wanted to say something but couldn't quite get it out. That, on top of everything else right now, was one thing Katsuki couldn't stand.

"Damn it, just spit it out already? Quit pussy-footing around." He snapped at them.

One of them better speak soon or so help them. It was taking everything he had not to flip the table and shake some sense into them.

Shitty Hait avoided his gaze for a moment longer then plucked up the courage from nowhere. Finally.

Their eyes met, red on red. Katsuki didn't like what he saw. What would normally be warm and inviting was cold, growing distant. It was familiar, in an unnerving way; it wasn't unlike that same look his mother would give him when she was cornering him. Setting him up to fall.

His anxiety skyrocketed but he held his composure. His grin died a little, a small scowl taking its place. He held the façade. He swallowed as subtly as he could holding his friends gaze.

"Uh... there's a rumour going around." the redhead started. He paused, and Katsuki waited in silence, his scowl growing darker contrasting sharply with the plain expression on his friends face. "About you."

Katsuki narrows his eyes, a plethora of things rushing his mind. Rumours about him were commonplace these days. There wasn't a day gone by since the Sports Festival that he hadn't heard something demeaning from strangers and peers alike. They ranged from the fairly believable to the downright insulting.

One kid, no older than about 5 or 6 had asked him straight up if he was spy for the Villains on the train one day shortly after the whole affair. The kid had guts to even talk to him if that was the stuff he was hearing. True to his direct nature Katsuki had shut it down with no lack of roughness, announcing he was going to be the best. That admittedly hadn't been the best way to go about it. He can still remember the wets eyes and the mothers glare. Familiar. He might even say he was jealous of the way the kids parents fawned over the twerp when he started rightly bawling.

Another rumour wouldn't be surprising really. His anxiety had faded a

little, whatever it was couldn't be any worse than what he'd already heard. Right? He hoped.

He leaned back in his seat and relaxed just a little trying to give an air of indifference.

"Tch. What are the extras saying now?"

Shitty Hair hesitates but seeing Katsuki about to snap at him again he tries. He avoids his gaze for another brief moment, glancing at the others. Katsuki follows his stare and notices how awkward they all look. How angry they are beneath it all. How fucking bad is it this time?

"Get it over with already!" he snaps again. He's genuinely impatient now,

Spurred by his words the redhead looks up again and locks eyes. He looks determined, set. For a second Katsuki is worried the intensity would burn him up. But that's what's so inspiring about Kirishima, once he finds a cause he's set on it, no changing his mind.

"Is it true?"

Katsuki barely contains his want to flip the table.

"Is what true you idiot, I'm not a fucking mind reader. You know I don't listen to all that crap!"

"Don't play dumb, Bakugou." He pleads. He sounds desperate. *Why?*

"I seriously don't have a fucking clue!" he almost screams.

"That you bullied Midoriya." Mina interrupts him. He pauses.

Katsuki feels himself freeze over, breathing became momentarily difficult as his lungs seized, but he managed to contain it. With a deep sigh he shook his head subtly, hoping, praying that he'd misheard.

He looks right at her, keeping the desperation out of his voice, "What?"

"Is it true that you beat him up and told him to kill himself? For years? Did you really do all those things?" she asked.

Of all the things... why'd it have to be that?

His mind wandered to Icy Hot. Had he seriously told them? Or was Deku finally done with being tight-lipped about it all. Was everyone fair game? Was Todoroki just the start? Who else had he told? His mind raced.

If it had been Todoroki, he couldn't really blame him, he had a really obvious soft spot from the Nerd (if the gym was anything to go off). After his warning he wouldn't put it past him to be petty enough to share it about. Keep everyone on watch.

But no...

Icy Hot doesn't strike him as that kind of person. From what he'd overheard during the festival he's the kind to respect the sensitivity of difficult issues and only raise them were necessary. In private. He'd waited until late last night to bring it up with him after all. A doubt creeps into his mind, thinking back to the Practical exam. He'd cussed at and hit Midoriya then. Even this morning fending off the Nerd's concern he'd snapped at him. Exploded at him in the gym. Had that changed his mind?

Fuck. He was getting ahead of himself. He needed facts before making any assumptions.

He can feel the ever-present scowl deepen on his face. The others are waiting still and he struggled with his mind trying to think of the best way to explain what happened back then. There's no denying it. He's not a liar, he won't cover this with lies. He can't hide from this, can't just brush it off. He's not a coward so he won't run from it either way.

Really, Katsuki just wants to know what they all think before he tells them. Do they think he did it? Do they think he's still doing it to the same extent, with the same intent. If so do his *friends* not think he's capable of redemption? That his past defines his future?

He's changed a bit since then, he was trying... didn't that count?

Katsuki pushes past that childish curiosity and gets straight to the point. He'd rather rip this band aid off with one quick yank, no matter how much it would hurt. There's no room for elaboration now, that'll come later when they ask for it. He has a feeling his friends won't accept anything other than a direct answer anyway.

Taking yet another deep breath he finally answers, "Yeah... It's true."

He keeps his voice flat and his expression remains sour despite the

fear induced anxiety still building in his gut. He feels sick. But that's really all he can bring himself to say. What else can he say? Without seeming even more pathetic.

Kirishima stares wide-eyed. There's a long stretch of quiet. The others are staring too, he can feel their eyes on him. It's making him uncomfortable. Bile claws at the back of his throat.

"Seriously!" Kaminari gasps, at long last breaking his uncharacteristic silence.

"Why?" Kirishima asks. His eyes are glassy. Katsuki wonders what he's thinking right now. Is it just like everyone else... does he just see a monster now? Does everything else not matter? Do it all hinge on his answer to this?

Katsuki bites his tongue. He doesn't answer. Can't. He thought he'd could do this but he can't. Just struggles to swallow down the bile rising in his throat. He's not even entirely sure he could give him an honest answer even after all this time if he tried.

He settles, in the end, for an old classic, "None of your business." Those nitty gritty details, those are between him and Deku only.

Kirishima scoffs looking away. The next thing he knows Mina is standing, very literally looking down on him as he remained stunned and seated. She lifts her tray ready to go. Katsuki looked up at her seeing a coldness in her abyssal eyes replacing the usually calm and chill aura.

"Can't believe we defended you before. How can you even think to call yourself a Hero when you've done things only a Villain would do?!" Katsuki can only sit and listen as he drills into him. "Things you're still doing!"

Katsuki narrows his eyes, *still doing?* "I'm not--"

"You nearly killed him earlier!" Kaminari accuses. An exaggeration if ever he'd heard one but nothing he hadn't expected given the circumstances.

"I--"

"Stay away from Midoriya... and me. In fact, don't... don't talk to any of us anymore. Right guys?! Come on Kiri. I don't feel like listening to whatever excuses he tripping over."

Kirishima looks disappointed as he stands reluctantly but follows her in the end, he doesn't look back. After that it was like watching a row of dominoes topple. Sero, followed next, quickly followed by Kaminari.

"Yeah. Go anywhere near them or Midoriya and I'll make you regret it. Go that?" Sero told him darting off not waiting for an answer. Kaminari just shook his head rushing off after them, but not before sending him an ice-cold look that only solidified the finality.

Katsuki watched them go. Heading across the canteen to an empty table right beside Deku and his nerdsquad.

He's left alone.

Its quiet.

He likes the quiet... right?

It's different though.

He frozen in place as he scans over the empty seats, a chill settling into his chest making his already rough breaths even harder to take in. Pain, intangible and not caused by anything touching him. Nothing but his own mind attacking him with all the reasons why this is happening. Why it was inevitable.

Why he deserves it.

Because he knows he deserves it. He'd made Deku spend most of his youth alone, ostracised for being Quirkless. How can he argue when karma had decided his fate was to be the same.

Daring a glance up Todoroki's eyes lock with his; stilling completely unaffected. And Katsuki pulls his gaze away *-weak-* looking down at his own tray, his meal suddenly all the more unappetizing. The emptiness in him makes way for a nausea unlike anything he's felt before. A warm itch is burning behind his eyes and he fights in silence to hold back tears he knows he doesn't deserve to shed. This is the least of what he deserves.

Swallowing the bile at the back of his throat he stands. He's leaves his uneaten lunch tray with the other returned ones and storms out racing to the nearest bathroom. He ignores the questioning stares of students he doesn't even know.

It happened, it finally happened. *She* was right! They learned the truth and realised he was a piece of shit, that he was worthless just like everyone else already knew. It was bound to happen, *she'd* warned him over and over. He had hoped it would be later rather than sooner. He doesn't know what to do.

If he'd been more prepared to explain himself, to understand the reasons why he'd done what he did... this would have been easier to deal with. Why now? Why not a little later. He'd been clinging to these people, his *friends*, but he knew it wouldn't last. He knew and he still let himself hope.

He'd been a fool to think it would last.

The door of the boys toilets swings wide, slamming against the wall as he claims a cubicle bolting it shut. There, in a shabby stall, he expels what little he'd eaten, empties his stomach and lets out the burning tears that were itching to be released.

"Fuck." He gasps, slumping onto the floor, gasping for air. As he sat there thinking about it, he knew. It really couldn't have happened any differently.

Chapter End Notes

Hey ya, hope the last part hit right? Might go back and revise the dialogue but imma leave it for now.

I have a few questions for anyone who wants have a say it how this develops;

1. I'm thinking about eventually introducing a few pairings with characters, and for our Blasty too, but if you have any preferences speak now because my head is currently leaning towards a more poly result but it could really go any way at this point. :)

2. How harsh do you want/expect the class to end up getting? Because I'm all for the going to the extreme. I've got a good bit drafted and half of it is just me arguing with myself over whether it could be more severe. :D

3. Anything else?

Next chapter; The Health checks. Also, we meet the Bakugou's and their terrible parenting methods.

The Smell of Smoke

Chapter Summary

Katsuki goes home and he has so much to deal with.

Chapter Notes

Wow, this chapter got so long! It was originally meant to be an introduction to the Bakugou's AND the Health checks, but the Bakugou family dynamic turned out to be a whole chapter in itself. So health checks is next time.

For this update the tags for the bad parenting, child abuse and gaslighting really come into play. So warnings for all that. I suppose also for referenced suicide baiting too. And of course swearing and canon-typical violence.

Gotta say thank you to all the lovely people who left comments and answered my questions! So nice hearing all your thoughts and kind words too! The energy boost from reading them is what got this one finished so quickly i think :)

More notes at the end too!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When he did finally make it home it was just starting to get dark. The sun had been slowly creeping lower in sky as Katsuki dragged his heels, once again in no rush to get there. He'd spent so much time in his head, just thinking and contemplating, that he'd lost track of time, missed the train. Waiting for the next one seemed unthinkable at the time, not with some people recognising him and whispering about him.

So, he just started walking. Wandered down old paths and routes he'd not been in years. Memories of a time when things were simpler began to surface. A time when his biggest worry was what he could do to impress all the idiots that followed him with blind devotion. A time when he didn't really care about what they thought. He made a point to walk a little faster past a certain alleyway where the memories

made his skin crawl.

It got to the point where it was so late that he no longer felt concerned about the consequences of arriving past his parent's imposed curfew. Simply being late, like the day before, that was enough to earn some harsh words. Add in the phone call from whoever it was about how he'd been hurt, that he'd shown so blatantly he had weakness in him... that had been enough to warrant a few smacks around the head and a smaller portion for dinner.

Simply taking a moment to understand that he'd been late because of reasons and circumstance beyond his own control wasn't something the Hag prone to. She rewarded effort. He had to earn the things he had. *I want, doesn't get*, as she would often remind him.

Katsuki was only grateful she hadn't sent him to the closet. He hated that stupid closet. Small is how he remembered it, so cramped it would leave his joints aching for day. He'd do anything to avoid it. It had been a year, maybe, since the Hag had last saw fit to use it to... educate him.

Idling by the front gate Katsuki let the seconds pass as he tried to conjure up what punishment she would have in store from him today. Would this be enough to make her lock him in that small prison again? He hoped not. He was certain, though, that she'd have seen his scores by now. She had the password to the online portal (*because why would he need it when he gets them in person?* She'd reasoned). He knows she checks his progress religiously. She had it set so she'll get notified when its updated too.

It wasn't going to be that bad. He tried to convince himself, but if he was still sitting at rank 3 after all these months then he was certain that, to the Hag, it was really just about the worst. No progress. That would equate to no effort in her eyes. That was almost worse than straight up failing.

With the events of the day still playing in his head on loop, Katsuki wasn't feeling up to dealing with her shit right now. He had things to figure out. Things that weren't going to fix themselves without his input... things he honestly didn't have a fucking clue where to begin fixing. Things he'd normally brush off and ignore, only it was different this time. This wasn't something that would go away on its own.

The notion that he'd even allowed himself to get so dependent on the Idiot Squad frightens him. He's never been one to rely on others,

always independent, always flying solo. They broke down his defences and got him to let them in. Now they were the ones building walls! He wished he could just ignore it completely, carry on like normal, like he didn't give a shit.

But the desire to find the right words would just pop into his head, the idea that maybe he could sort himself out *and* still have them by his side was tempting.

Stupid. You heard them! They want nothing to do with you! They don't care why you did it! They only care THAT you DID it!

Katsuki really hated that voice in his head sometimes. But he was pretty sure in this instance it was very, very right. Still, trying again couldn't hurt.

It's times like these he wished he were as brave as he claimed to be.

Minutes passed, the sky growing darker still, changing slowly from the fiery orange he loved to a chilling blue. The street lights flickered to life pre-empting the darkness to follow. If he didn't move soon he was never going to.

He pulled out his phone to check the time. After 6, closer to 7 he saw when his mind decided to actually take in the numbers. He nearly winced at the number of missed call notifications from the Hag. Thirteen with just as many voicemails. Nothing from his old man, but what else can he expect when the man treated him like more of a passing guest than an actual blood relative. Still saying that, of his parents, Katsuki preferred his father's quiet instruction opposed to his mother's loud and oft times wounding criticism.

Ridding the screen of the notifications he slipped the device back into his trouser pocket and stared once more at the grand façade of the place he called home. It was taller than most of the other homes in the area which made it stand out, three floors, several balconies: one connecting to his room. He could just climb in the window... no... he'd it locked the day before.

There were two cars in the drive, so for once the Old Man decided not to work late, huh? He mused about what they might be doing. His dad in his study perhaps? His mother... what would she be doing? He hopes they've already ate because he doesn't think he can stomach anything right now; his guts have been twisting and gnawing themselves into unsolvable knots for hours... since lunch if he was going to be exact.

All he had to do was get in, with as little fuss as possible, and get to his room. That's it, that's all he needed to do. Simple. Easy

I am so fucked.

Katsuki took several of the deepest breaths he could manage before approaching the door, the gravel of the drive crunching too loudly underfoot. Nausea spiked yet again when he turned the key in the lock and slipped inside, quickly and quietly as he could locking it again. He slipped off his shoes, putting them away as neatly as he could in his hurry.

He paused at the edge of the genkan, listening closely for movement. The deathly quiet was ominous but he'd be damned if he let himself hover about and wait for something to happen when he could be moving.

His foot didn't get to reach the second step the staircase before the feeling of a fist clenching tightly around his collar stalled his ascent. The last thing he wanted was to get choked when *she* didn't let go.

"Where the fuck have you been? Do you know what time it is?" the Hag questioned. No yelling so far. The quiet tone worried him even more that her yelling would have.

He'd always guessed his own explosions would be the reason he would go deaf at an early age, but his mother could often give their decibel count a run for their money.

"I KNOW I'm late Hag! Let go already!" Katsuki tried to pry her hand away though with no real effort. He knew it would be pointless to even try but the familiarity in the act was some twisted form of comfort he couldn't do without right now. It was the only time he ever got close to holding her hand. He can't even remember the last time he did for real.

It was much to his surprise when she did let go opposed to tightening her grip like she would normally. His heart raced at the new response, thinking maybe this time she'd understand. Her vanished hold was quickly followed by a woosh of air and a numbing crack.

His cheek throbbed with a new and familiar heat. So, so different from Icy Hot's freezing touch.

The spot her palm had met was no doubt already turning red because of the force behind it. Not an uncommon reaction for those times he

felt daring enough to talk back or raise his voice a little. It never stopped him trying though. Sometimes it was the only way to get her to notice him.

“Don’t take that tone with me brat!” she scolded. “You know the rules. On school days you’re supposed to be home no later than 5pm unless you have extra classes that *I* approve. I don’t care what excuses you have today. Yesterday was strike one, this is strike two. You do remember what happens when it gets to strike three? I don’t care how old you are, I won’t hesitate.”

He so badly wants to snap and growl and call her out for using that exact same tone with him but... he just can’t bring himself to do anything but nod and hum his answer. This day has already been so draining and the last thing he wants is to get into it with his *mom*. He could be here for hours if he provoked her enough. Better to play along and deal with it for now.

God he just wanted to faceplant his bed and forget this shitty day already.

“Good. You make me waste my time worrying again and you’ll know about it.”

Worry? She was worried? If only he could bring himself to believe that. All she worries about it what everyone else thinks. Huh, the sudden revelation makes him shiver, maybe he really is just like her.

He turned to continue upstairs.

“And where do you think you’re going now?”

The ugly, impatient child in him reared its head, hearing what right now sounded like the dumbest question ever.

“Bed? Where else would I go if I’m tired?”

Turning away again he tried (and failed) to put some distance between them. She grabbed his shoulder and dragged him back down.

“No. You’re not going anywhere. You’re going sit and eat with us.”

So, they haven’t eaten yet, yay... Katsuki makes no effort to hide the exaggerated roll of his tired eyes.

“I’m not hungry.” He complained as she pulled him against his will.

He really wasn't.

"I don't care. At least try to act like you're part of this family. I mean it when I say I'll get rid of you."

He sagged under her hold. *Just go along with it.*

The words had no real meaning to them anymore. They'd been spoken many times it wasn't anything more than an empty half-hearted threat at this point. It never happened like that. Of course, it had scared the shit out of him the first time she'd locked him out though, so he knew she wasn't entirely messing around. But that didn't happen often and he was always welcomed back the next day.

She let him walk the rest of the way to the dining room, breaking away to the kitchen while he slumped into his usual seat at the table. A single place set in front of him, opposite two on the other side; the optimal position from which they watched and evaluated him each day. One of which his father currently occupied.

The man didn't even look up from the article he was reading (something about the latest fashion trends probably), he only paused once to fix his glasses.

He didn't stay late, but brought the work home...

Katsuki sat in resigned silence, arms folded across himself as he fought the urge to jump up and leave. He didn't want anything worse to happen. The Hag was being abnormally calm despite his worst expectations. He couldn't risk it, not today.

He only looked up when his mother came over with two steaming bowls. The smell of curry met his nose and he tried not to frown. She set one down for his father who thanked her without looking up and sat the other in front of her own place before going back for a third bowl. Only it didn't have the inviting stream of steam rising from it.

The sight of classic curry and rice greeted him. Something he'd say might be close to his favourite food... until earlier. The smell only brought back the looks in their eyes, the indifference and disgust... the disappointment but above all the nausea that came with it. That resurgence alone made him feel like throwing up, nevermind the cold and congealed nature of the serving. If he didn't know any better his paranoia would allow him to believe this was the same bowl he hadn't eaten earlier. But that would be impossible and not to mention downright stupid.

The Hag shooed the article out of her husband's hands, encouraging him to eat while it was still hot.

The quiet endured, only disturbed by the scrapping of spoons in their bowls. Katsuki just stared at his lap, events from lunch replaying over and over. He was trying to see where it went wrong, where if he'd said anything differently or pushed a little more, that it might have turned out better. The more he tried the more it became clear. Even if he'd been able to explain himself, he doubted the reasoning would have been enough to change anything.

Don't bother trying to fix anything, all you do is destroy! He frowns at the voice, could it not tell he wanted this to work out. Or failing that go away.

"Eat." his mother snapped, sounding like her already short temper was about to snap. So much for calm.

"I told you I wasn't hungry." He snaps in kind.

"Well there's nothing else so don't complain later."

He looked at the dish before him, physically repulsed by the look, the smell, the memories he was begrudgingly associating with it. Why was it so fucking easy to make associations?! Stupid brain! Stupid curry! Fuck, what is he even thinking right now?!

Katsuki let out a sigh. He doesn't think he's ever sighed so much in one day before.

Maybe he should just eat something. It would get the Hag off his case about it. And lunch did get flushed away, not mention he was already short from the night before. He could do with the energy. If tomorrow was going to be anything like today, then he'd need it.

It was almost painful to swallow the first mouthful. But once he started he realized just how hungry he was. His twitchy stomach growled in protest so he ate slow in an effort keep it down.

This simple task, however, wasn't enough to distract his mind which was still coming to terms with what happened. After he threw up in the toilets he ended up spending a good part of the rest of lunch there. At least until he decided it would be fruitless to just sit there moping. He washed his hands and face, rinsed his mouth at the nearest fountain before returning to class.

He wasn't going to let it end like that. Bakugou Katsuki doesn't just lie down. He doesn't give up. He doesn't lose!

The whole way he ran scenarios in his head. If he just got one of them to understand then it would be fine. It would snap back to normal... right?

Kirishima. He had always been the most understanding. He'd been the one to approach him in the first place. The one to bring him into the group. Katsuki knew he'd been friends with the others before him, so he'd help convince them. He didn't know why he let himself get so hopeful.

To be met with awkward silence when he tried to speak to him before class started weakened his resolve. To see the angry looks on Kaminari and Sero's face as he tried again. To have Ashido literally push her way in between them and start talking to Kirishima like Katsuki hadn't been there at all... He felt like exploding the whole damn room.

He wasn't going to let it get to him though.

He'd tried again at the end of the day being met with similar resistance. The Bakusquad no longer, but now an odd collective with the Dekusquad chatting and messing together as they left for the day. Chatting loudly and enthusiastically about a new Arcade that had opened down town. The same one they'd begged him to go to with them over the first week of summer break. The one he'd refused to go to until their nagging had him relenting. The one he'd probably never go to now, and definitely not with them at any rate.

Would it be any different if he'd told them about this from the get-go? If when he was introduced to them, he had said *'Hey I used to bully the shit out of Deku and also once literally told him kill himself!'* would they have looked at him with the same kind eyes and welcomed him like they had? Of course not. Although, if he'd done that he wouldn't have this problem now.

His bowl being suddenly removed from in front of him had his attention snapping back to the now. It's only then he notices his vision is a little blurry at the edges. Katsuki blinks harsh and rapid, as his mother cleared the table while speaking to the Old Man about some inane fashion trend from the past decade. It didn't matter that he hadn't eaten much or wasn't finished, they eat as a *family* and they were finished. It was his fault for being slow, for day dreaming instead of focusing on the task at hand. She dawdled by the sink, not washing

the dishes but setting them aside after storing away the leftovers. Katsuki would have to wash them himself as it always was when he didn't cook.

While the Hag did that the Old Man glanced over the article before turning to Katsuki, the first time he'd looked his way since he came home. Clearly the man was looking to fill his daily quota of talking at least once to him.

"So... son, that exam, that was today yes? How'd it go?"

Katsuki let his fists clench below the table. School and anything related to it was the last thing he wanted to talk about right now, let alone with his parents. Granted, he was impressed the Old man even knew about the exams, sure he got the day wrong but normally anything about Katsuki's life (beyond what affected him and the Hag) went in one ear and straight out the other. Katsuki had long since given up on getting excited to share his success with him when he found himself repeating the same things over and over. More effort that it was worth, and yet an odd kind of godsend too. One less shitty parent to yell at him if he dropped a grade.

"That was yesterday, Masaru. But, yes, *Katsuki*, do tell us how it went." Mitsuki said, sitting back with them a hot cup of tea in hand. Her tone was teasing. Cornering him. Setting him up. No matter his answer, she'd rip through him in some way because she *knew* his scores already. And she knew he knew that.

Still, Katsuki sat a little straighter, willed his fists to relax and suppressed the urge to pop off the sweat that had been building since he arrived. Another rule, No explosions in the house.

"Tch. I passed. Obviously."

"Obviously." His old man parroted, content with the response. The ghost of the fakest of fake smiles turned on his lips before his dad looked back to his article again. The indifference was expected, Katsuki was more than used to it after so many years. Didn't make it hurt any less.

That's where his father's involvement in the conversation would end no doubt. Again, surprising, since he didn't remind him that he hadn't worked hard enough or that all his problems were caused by his own incompetence. Then again, he didn't have to think hard to guess the man was keeping quiet so the Hag could have the honours and leave him feeling even worse.

Mitsuki would egg him on and couldn't wait to get him talking just to have a chance at tearing him down. Masaru never bothered beyond pleasantries. It was different in company of course, where they were obligated to appear as *good* parents. Those moments were always confusing as heck. Random moments that reminded him so much of times long, long ago. Before he became a problem. Of when they used to be understanding and kind and patient and gentle. Loving even. It was unsettling just how quickly they could switch it up. They were the living embodiment of the term two-faced.

"Passed, huh?" The Hag started. "You're still sitting at third rank so I'd hardly say it was a pass. You weren't even that far above the fourth rank. And Little Izuku was the only reason you passed the practical right? I thought you were spending all your time studying but seems you were just goofing off. Wasting everyone's time and our money too."

He can't help glaring at the mention of fucking Deku... Hag should just adopt him if she loves him so much.

"I wasn't goofing off! I could have gotten a higher rank if..."

He trails off as the Hag's stare narrows at him. He shouldn't have raised his voice. The Old Man still sits, unaffected and happy to be ignorant.

She sighed before taking a long sip of her tea. Then she stood, rounding the table to stop by him. "*Could have*" isn't good enough. You know that. How many times do we have to tell you that a cocky attitude isn't going to get you far without the hard work, baby." Her hand strokes through his hair; soft and gentle. Deceiving. "It's embarrassing when you say things like you'll be Number One and then get ranked third. Or when say you'll win and then throw a tantrum, like you did at the Sports Festival."

"I still won." He mumbles, going quiet again when her fingers press harder.

"Did you? All I can remember is bad press and seeing that horrid clip of a wild animal played over and over for weeks. I don't blame them for doing it, I just wish they'd been more tactful about it. I need you to think about what you're doing baby, we don't need you fucking things up more and making our lives any harder than you already do. Help us help you by not making everything impossible. Okay baby? Can you do that for me?"

Katsuki is looking up at her, not that he had any choice with her hands posing his head. The soft expression he sees is comforting in a way it shouldn't be because he knows there's something wicked underneath it. He nods as best he can.

"Use your voice baby. I know you're good at all the talk." She smiles. *Fake.*

He swallows, his throat suddenly dryer than should be humanly possible. "Y-yeah. I can do that."

"Good boy." She pats his head. "You better this time. Now, go do the dishes and get to bed, you look like shit warmed up."

Katsuki remained still for a while longer. It wasn't anything he hadn't heard before. Like with everything she said, he could almost rhyme it off word for word with how often he heard it. He could never disprove it, just had to sit there and take it. This time the words sank a little deeper.

'we don't need you fucking things up more and making our lives any harder than you already do.'

Heck, *he* was struggling not to believe it this time. It was one of the reasons why he tried so hard to be the best. Why he threw himself in everything head first, to master it and not have to worry anyone. To prove he wasn't there to waste anyone's time or be an inconvenience. Seems he wasn't quite there yet. Not according to his parents. How many people would agree with them?

The Hag sharply whacking him across the back of the head shocked him, the smallest of explosions slipping through. She followed up by throwing a dishtowel at him and yanking him to his feet.

"Those dishes won't clean themselves. And don't you *dare* let off another explosion in this house." She hissed.

Without arguing he snatched up the towel and took up position by the sink more than content to distract himself washing the few dishes there. He did so as silently as he could all the while silently cursing her out in his mind. The health check was tomorrow, the last thing he needed was a bunch of unexplainable bumps and bruises just because he broke another plate getting angry over nothing. Because that what it was... absolutely nothing.

He got lost in the steady rhythm of scrubbing the grime from the pots

and bowl. Their voices, that started as his father lamenting the extra hours he had to work and his mother complaining about his absence, eventually became background static. A pleasant drone in comparison.

As he relaxed into the task the thought of nothing but getting up to his own room occupied his mind. Then thought of lying down became replaying the day out the way he wished it had gone. And then out of nowhere the creeping image of *their* faces came back. He had to go in tomorrow and face them. Those looks and whispers, it was manageable when it was strangers but the Squad... Worst of all would be Deku who would undoubtedly notice the sudden change. Which of course would only make everything even worse if Todoroki carried on being an A-grade asshole about it all.

Fuck. Katsuki still can't believe the Candy Cane asshole bloody told them! Was it even him?! It was infuriating to no end how he couldn't decide if he would be the type or not. But then who else other than Deku?

Katsuki glared at his distorted reflection in the now murky water, pulling the plug to drain it away. He turned to drying off what remained continuing to frown angrily. It was fine, it would be fine. Just forget about it. If they persist, then their loss. They didn't want anything to do with him. Fine. He could deal with that. He could go back to how it was before, before them, before UA. So long as they let him be. But Deku... he really was the only real issue.

His prolonged silence was again rewarded with another slap to back of his head. The sudden attack, sparking his battle instincts and he immediately dropped the plate he was drying, the accompanying explosion lighting the dishcloth on fire. He dunked the small, barely there, blaze into what was water was left in the sink, dousing the flames quickly. The smell of burnt cloth assault his nose and he knew he was in for it.

"Fuck sake brat! Can't you do anything without breaking something!" the Hag yelled at him.

"Maybe if you weren't bothering me every ten seconds!" he yelled back.

"Don't raise your voice at me young man. That fucking attitude of yours... do you want to fail? Is that it? Are messing up on purpose so I have a reason to pull you out of UA, because trust me you don't have to try so hard."

“What? No!” he rushes to answer back, *where the fuck did this even come from?!* “The hell are you even talking about! I’m doing the best I can!”

His mother stood above him, folding her arms and suddenly calm again. *Danger.*

“Oh really? Then why aren’t you at the top of the class? Why can’t you just act normal? Why don’t you ever do what I tell you to? You remember who’s paying for your tuition right? It’s time you stopped talking shit and actually did something with everything we give you! Try acting like a Hero student. Look at Izuku, he’s only just learning to use his Quirk and he’s already just as good if not better than you. Stop wasting everyone’s time! Stop wasting the opportunities you’ve been handed because of your Quirk, don’t forget you have to work for it too.”

“I AM trying! I AM working hard! I-“ his rebuttal stopped with yet another slap, the force behind it so much he falters a fraction.

“DON’T raise your voice at me! Half of Japan watched you have a hissy fit and you want me to believe you’re *trying*? Are you sure you don’t want them to hate you even more?” a few more smacks punctuate her words, each harder than the last, to the point Katsuki’s is forced to shield himself.

As much as he wanted to argue, he didn’t. Years of practice and subtle conditioning warned him not to, not if he wanted to make out without a serious scratch. The slaps were still light enough to not bruise. If he pushed her though, it would get a lot worse.

The Hag was like a sleeping bear, one you definitely didn’t want to risk poking but simply breathing the wrong way was enough to rile her up anyway. Besides there was some truth to her words, he’s pretty sure his constant fuckups really are wasting everyone’s time. But he wasn’t doing it on purpose, he’s just not entirely sure what he’s doing wrong in the first place or how to avoid it.

He’ll just keep trying until he gets it right. Until finally he’s doing his best and then he might reach the Hag’s insurmountable expectations.

“If you really are trying to get everyone to hate you, you’re doing a brilliant job. It’s no wonder you’ve no friends!”

His mind stalled then all at once launched into overdrive. His first instinct was to deny, deny, deny but... he wasn’t a liar. He couldn’t

just let himself come out say *I do have friends, or even that he did* because after today he's not sure they ever really were his friends.

Friends look out for each other.

Friends have each other's backs.

Friends listen to each other and understand each other.

They don't turn their backs on you the second the rose tinted glass gets a little cracked. They don't side with someone else without hearing your side of the story. They don't look at you like you're a monster or call you a villain because you made some horrible mistakes when you were younger. Nobody's perfect.

The definitely don't ignore you when you try to makes amends.

No, he never did have friends did he?

The thought that he was likely used just so they had someone useful to study or train with becomes glaringly obvious. The fact that right now the Hag is more right about everything than he's ever heard her be sickens him to his core and he snaps.

He can't take it anymore. She thinks he's such a brat so he'll fucking show her a brat.

Katsuki storms past her to the dining table where the Old Man is still reading that damn stupid fucking article. He can hear her yammering on behind him but he really doesn't give a shit about the words she's saying anymore. He's already beyond the agony, he's numb with the adrenaline pumping through him has it all moves in slow motion.

"I'm talking to you, you ungrateful little shit!" he hears and the final weak thread of his self-control breaks.

Katsuki couldn't stop himself, the energy building in his palms tensing like a rubber band beyond its limit poured over. The hair trigger flipped. He knew he wasn't thinking straight. He wanted so badly to prove her wrong but how could he when she's so fucking right! About him, about everything! And the Squad, they know now too, so they got out before it was too late!

With an explosion (probably the biggest he's set off indoors for over a decade) he knocks back the nearest chair and the table rattles spilling her abandoned tea. The wood threatens to catch fire under the heat of

his palms as he strikes it.

“SHUT UP! JUST SHUT YOU STUPID FUCKING HAG!”

It's so quiet he could hear a pin drop. Finally. Quiet...

The silence makes way for his own panting and the sound of blood pulsing through his head. He returns to calm (as close as he can get to it) and realizes that maybe this wasn't the best idea he's ever had in a fit of rage.

Fuck.

“Katsuki.” His father spoke, drawing out the vowels. Finally putting the article aside, his tone low and threatening. A warning not to try anything else.

Fuck. Fuck!

Katsuki knew he'd been on thin ice before but now he may as well be drowning.

FUCK. FUCK. FUCK!

“You finished?” Mitsuki asked, glaring at him in a way that was just begging him to lash out again. The fact she was currently overlooking his angry outburst was the least of his worries. When he was quiet for too long she pressed again. “Well?”

He bit the inside of his cheek, tasting metal he calmed a fraction more. His palms sparked against the table as he stepped back to glare at her. He made the bed may as well lie in it.

“I thought your question was rhetorical... you know, like they always are... Hag.” He couldn't help the sharp tone of disdain seeping in. No doubt the timid scowl on his face wasn't helping either. Not so timid that she offered him mercy. No. That would be too much of a good thing and good things never happen to him. Not without an avalanche of shit following.

It was like engaging in a real battle. Like being back at the USJ and fighting real villains. The fresh rush of adrenaline left him breathless but the truth of the situation was obvious. This was a losing battle for him.

In his adrenaline fuelled daze he tried to escape, to remove himself

from the situation he'd made, but his mother's dagger-like nails were already drilling into his scalp before he'd even taken a whole step. They laced like short vines into his hair and pulled hard, dragging him along. He clenched his teeth to the brink of cracking under the pressure, he couldn't make a sound. Couldn't let her know it hurt. He felt himself moving in tandem with her pace to lessen his pain. It didn't work.

Like always he reached to push her hand away, a small attempt to ease the pain by force. When she tightened her grip he gave up his struggle. Katsuki had been through this so many times before, he knew the script and his role was nothing more than an unwilling participant.

His mother scoffed, as she pulled him up the stairs, "I was trying to be reasonable but you never make things easy do you? You think I like having to do this?"

Katsuki stayed quiet. As always. Rhetorical. She expects him to know the answer even if he doesn't. He swears she enjoys this sometimes. Making him squirm is her favourite pastime, he's convinced.

"You're smart enough to know you can't win this, but not enough to put any real effort in for an exam? Think about poor Izuku, he had to drag your deadweight to the finish! And don't think I didn't notice you sleep in these past mornings, I didn't raise you to be a lazy brat! God, why do I even bother?"

Her onslaught continued as she dragged him bodily to the second floor and past his own room to the guest room. Katsuki's heart skipped at what that meant.

No. Not there.

The room wasn't used so much, not as a bedroom, not since he'd succeeded in obliterating whatever positive relationship there had ever been between himself and Deku. Not since his mother found out what he'd been doing and had forced him to answer for it in the most cruel way.

The walls were bare, no different from his own room after his latest fuck up. Empty only for the stacked storage boxes. The source of his stress came into view. The closet. It was also crammed full of boxes, more than last time. All strategically arranged so they left only a small space just big enough for him to fit if he curled up the right way.

Katsuki succumbs easily when he throws him to the ground. "In." she orders.

He obeys, feeling very much like the scared 8 year old he was the very first time this happened. He's ready for her to just slam the door and bolt it shut when instead she speaks again, "Phone."

Damn, he was really hoping she be too furious to remember that. He swallowed as he handed it over, he hated how his hand trembled. She slipped it into her own pocket. He turned away, wrapping his arms around his knees, curling up small as he could get. It's not comfortable, his body isn't going to thank him for this. Completely resigned to his fate he waited for her leave him.

"Hands."

He looks up at her. The stoic stare on her face sent chills down his spine. "Huh?"

Following her movement up he watched as she reached, coming back with a long patterned tie. No further explanation was needed. He pressed his palms together, interlocking his fingers and let her wrap the material around them tightly. She used to do this to help him control his Quirk when he was much younger. Pain was a surprisingly effective deterrent back then. She had been a Girl scout in her youth, she always reminded him. She knew how to tie a good knot. The time between the last occurrence of this hadn't dampened that skill in the slightest.

"Can't believe we're back to this after you were doing so well." She crouched in front of him, brushing stray hairs from his eyes. He couldn't help but glare. "Don't make that face, you know this for your own good. You want to be a Hero, baby. Don't you think it's about time you started acting like one? Stop acting like a brat and grow the fuck up? Hmm. You don't see Inko doing this with Izuku do you? You know why? Because he's a good boy and does what his mother tells him. He doesn't make things difficult for anyone."

Katsuki is quiet, even as his brain offers up piles of evidence and counter arguments to those statements. But he doesn't want to be gagged for talking back, he doesn't think he could handle that so soon after... the last time. He shakes the thought away. His mother sighs as she continues to brush back his hair.

"This is all for your own good, baby. I promise." She repeats. As she stand she pulls one door shut and pauses. "Don't even think about

making a sound until I let you out.”

The door is finally shut and he hears the lock click. The pitch black heightens his other senses and he hears her footsteps cross the floor and then the guestroom door shuts too. Katsuki knows he's here for the long haul. He'll be lucky if she lets him out before his alarm. Fuck he's probably going to end up being late... again... He can only be thankful that he got to eat something. That and it's not the weekend. Those are the worst.

Time passes. His usual method of pretending he's training his mental stamina isn't working. His mind too far too scattered with thoughts neither here nor there. He can't tell if the seconds are going too slow or too fast and in the dark everything becomes a non-entity, something he can't measure or control. He hates the lack of control. He hates the dark. Katsuki's loathed to admit it, but he's afraid of it. But only in here, in this closet; it's only here that the dark truly scares him. Where he's alone and has no choice but to face the demon in his mind.

He sleeps with a crack in the curtains so the street lights seep in. In summer he doesn't close them at all since there's so much daylight. Just so he can be sure he's in his own room and not *here*.

It's not long before his breathing is rapid and shallow. He feels like his head is floating. His mind is making shapes in the dark, sensations are amplified tenfold. Trailing beads of sweat become like tendrils of sludge, the pull of the tie around his wrist feels like cuffs and he *can't* use his Quirk to chase the feelings away. Not without hurting himself. Not without making noise. Neither of which are an option right now. He shuts his eyes and begs sleep to take him but his imagination takes the chance to run rampant.

He'll be fine. He'll be fine, he just needs to go to sleep. Yeah, go to sleep. Then it'll be over before he knows it.

Fuck why are you such an idiot! You could be in your own bed if you'd just held on a little longer! But no you went and fucked it all up AGAIN! Because that's what you are, a FUCK UP!

Katsuki sniffs, barely holding back a sob. He can't ignore it when there's nothing to block it out. The words wound him and before long he's hearing his former friends curse him too.

Going to be the best my ass! Can't even fend off his own mother! How pathetic! He hears Kirishima's playful tones sneering. No. No, he

wouldn't say something like. The idiot is too damn positive!

And he said Midoriya was a Crybaby! Look at him wailing in a cupboard! Because its a little dark?! Jeez. Kaminari scoffs.

What a loser! Mina shouts and he hears Sero laugh in agreement.

Over and over they begin to repeat his mother's words, driving home the fact that it's all his fault. Because it is. He's in this mess because of the actions and decisions *he* made. No one made them for him, he can admit that much.

Fighting back would be easy enough. He could do it no problem. But he can't help but not.

However mean his mother is... she's just looking out for him. Trying to help him to see sense. Helping him be better in the long run. So what if her methods are rough, he'd like to see someone else's approach to raising him. He'd like to see anyone do what she's done for the past 16 years while his father pretended he didn't exist.

He felt for her, for both of his parents. He could never bring himself to harm them, even in defence. They were *his* parents. The only parents he'd ever have. The people who brought him into this world and who'd fed and clothed him his whole life.

Family.

He loved them, who else would he be without them guiding him. What's more, through everything, all the shit he's caused, all the bullying and bad press... they've never left him. Never abandoned him. He owed them and some small desperate part of him was still hoping that maybe he could earn that love back if they just kept teaching him.

This was just another lesson.

Chapter End Notes

Now, upfront I have nothing against Mistuki or Masaru in canon, but for this I wanted them to be the worst. Mitsuki is super controlling and Masaru just doesn't give a fuck until he has to. If you're looking for reasons why it will become clearer as this progresses. I just wanted this chapter to help set up background

for why Katsuki thinks the way he does and to hint at some super unhealthy coping mechanisms too.

I've no questions this week, but of course if you have any questions or queries feel free to leave a comment. So far I've been able to answer most if not all of them!

You can also let me know if you find any stupid spelling or grammar mistakes! I try my best but there's always one or two that slip through.

Next time; The Health Checks (for real this time) + Class 1-A being 'protective'

Loud and Clear

Chapter Summary

A Health check and a terrible realisation.

Chapter Notes

Chapter Warnings; Bullying, reference to suicide, swearing.

This one is super long, I thought about uploading it as two parts but figured it would be okay for now (I still might for now it's just one big ass chapter).

I struggled to get this to a place where I felt happy with it and I'm still feeling a bit 'meh' about it. But i've been rereading and writing for ages now i feel like anymore and it'll come out even worse.

So hopefully this carries on well and makes sense too! :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It could have been hours, or maybe no more than a few minutes, it was impossible for Katsuki to tell. The usually calming quiet was only serving to keep his nerves set on edge, any small sounds that reached his ears quickly morphed to some insult in the distorted voices of people he thought he could trust. His eyes continued to pull imaginary shapes from the nothing around him. Shadows turning to looming figures with glowing eyes that watched and judged him, taking a detailed record of just how pathetic he is.

The cramped space around him wasn't helping either. It just seemed to get smaller and smaller with every breath, which only made it harder to breathe. His chest feels tight, shrinking with a pain that brings more tears to his eyes. An unwelcome sting accompanied by a warmth that drags down his cheeks and soaks into his shirt collar. No matter what he does, no matter how often he swipes them away, they don't stop.

Katsuki just wants it *all* to *stop*.

He'll do better, he's promises, he will. He didn't mean to shout, to

break the rules. Didn't mean to lose control, didn't mean to be such a *brat*... well he had meant to, but he was just mad, angry. It had been difficult to hear her say all that. To have her remind him he's alone and has no one. To have the truth laid out so plain and straightforward that even he couldn't deny it.

'The truth hurts'. That's what people say isn't it? Katsuki has had ample time to think about it and now he thinks they might be right.

He'd lashed out, not wanting to hear those words. But had just gone and proven everyone right. Proved right all the people calling him a wild animal, a *Villain*. It's impossible to argue with their criticism when he was too busy living up to it. He recalls the hand written report from the Number Four Hero himself, listing all his shortcomings and flaws in character, how unsociable he was and how intimidating his image was. Basically... how unsuited to Heroism he was. He'd read it a thousand times, taking note of where he was falling short. And if that wasn't enough he could always count on his dear mother to remind him.

Without her to step in, what else would he have done? He can't help but imagine the entire house burning, however much he swears he'd never be that bad. He likes to think he'd have managed to retain some semblance of self-control had things gotten worse. The Hag has a way of showing him just how weak he is, of just how much further he has to go before he's perfect.

Katsuki can be better. He know he can be better. Knows he can prove them all wrong if just given the chance. He knows. The itch in his palms urges him to prove it, to blast his way out and get to work. He could do it, and it would be so easy.

Back then, when this all started, and his explosions were still lacklustre and unstable escape had been a pipe dream. But once he learned the trick to his power output he'd been unstoppable. It was easy to believe that's what it had all been about. To think *she'd* be impressed with his progress, but the Hag had been anything but and it only got worse.

Leaving, escaping? That would be like giving in, it would only make him weak. And Katsuki isn't weak, he's strong. Has to be strong. He could do it but he won't because this will make him all the stronger in the end. He's come a long way from the being a snotnosed cry-baby who couldn't last a few minutes, he's so much stronger now.

He doesn't cry (*where she can see*).

He doesn't lie (*when he's sure she already knows*).

He tries to do all that she's asks of him, even if it's impossible. Katsuki does everything he can to the perfect son, the perfect Hero.

It became a way of avoiding punishments such as the one he was currently enduring. Progress of sorts. The only good thing his mother ever acknowledged him for. So he'll handle this a little longer; endure it like he's gotten so good at doing. It might be harder than he remembers but that just shows how much he was slipping. If he was going to be a Hero, a strong Hero like All Might, he had to get through it. The Number One and best Hero would even blink at this.

Katsuki can do it. And he'll do it alone because it'll be better that way. Because he's strong and will be stronger for it. He's not good enough yet, not the best, not even close, that's why it's necessary.

The Hag is right, no matter how much he wishes she weren't. He's to blame for all the trouble, all the bad is because he's not good enough. Katsuki knows this now, regardless of how much he hates to admit it.

He takes a deep breath, brushes away the tears again, quietly praying that this time when it ends, it'll be the last.

*

The sudden burst of light is more than blinding, it's painful. The closet doors which had been sealed shut are pulled wide; he hadn't even heard the lock click. Katsuki jolts and freezes, his body at war with how to react, his eyes squeezed shut but the light seeming to sear through his closed lids to hurt him all the same.

He dares to squint, seeing the pale sheen of early morning, and is thankful for the cool, fresh air billowing in.

"Oh Katsuki..." he hears his father but can't yet see him. The man tuts in disapproval. "Just what are we going to do with you?"

Katsuki's too tired to care. His burned eyes finally manage to focus and there he can clearly see his Old Man standing by the doorway,

aside and allowing the light to stream in freely. A quick and quiet way of shocking him to full consciousness. He can't move, not just yet his system is still booting up and getting used to the familiar sensations that come with being awake.

His father kneels to unravel his binds. The Old Man quietly laments the loss of one of his favourite ties, taking the now soaked in highly volatile sweat tie which is only good for the bin. Katsuki couldn't make himself feel bad about it, the Hag had chosen it and it was just a tie one of many that his father owned. Being a well-known, and successful, fashion designer meant he was never short on such things anyway.

Katsuki watches in silence as his father sighs, standing over him now and shaking his head.

"Hurry and get ready for school, you don't want to be late. Behave for your mother. Okay sport?"

And once again he's alone, sitting balled up in the corner of a much too small storage hole parading as a temporary prison cell. Katsuki allows himself to sit, slowly clenching and unclenching his hands willing blood to circulate. They feel so numb, like deadweight's at the end of his arms, something that he hadn't even noticed over the urgency of not freaking out. Soon enough, pins and needles kick in, and not just in his hands.

As Katsuki tentatively stretches out his legs, they too begin to tingle, so icy and intense that staying put was the only way to relieve the pain they brought.

Adding to his discomfort were the lines of red running every way across the back of his hands, deep reminders of the night before, and his failure. When he noticed the harsher ragged and oozing red abrasions around his wrists, where in the tie had bitten and chaffed all night in his quiet panic, he only just held back a whimper.

"Fucking hell" was all the speech he could muster as he fought the urge to cry again. He'd done enough of that for one day.

A lifetime seemed to pass as he shuffled out of the small space, the endeavour being harder than it needed to be. With numb limbs and seizing joints it was a fight just to keep moving once he started. A fight to ignore the spreading discomfort threatening to keep him floored. But once he was out, collapsed on the plush carpet, and sighing a long breathe of relief he knew the suffering had been worth

it.

Katsuki's entire being was pain but in that moment, sinking into the soft fibres, he was so comfortable he could almost fall asleep right there. That was until he heard the distinct sound of his mother ascending the stairs. A sound, among many, that were hardwired into his brain with a programmed response of 'move'.

It was all the incentive he needed, nevermind her voice carrying threats of murder. With practised ease he buried down every lasting ache and stood. The resounding pop of several joints as he took a few steps was as satisfying as it was agonizing.

The Hag arrived at the door just as he did too. The concerned look she gave him was vastly overpowered by unimpressed glint in her eyes and it was heart-breaking. *Still not good enough then.*

"Oh, baby you're a mess. Go clean up, can't have everyone thinking you're any more of an animal than they already do. And be quick about it. There's a few things I need you to do before you go."

Left to stumble back to his own room like a fresh zombie, he quickly showered. The feel of water ice cold then boiling hot served to wash away the filth from the day before leaving him lighter in both body and mind. Rid of the worst of the aches and pain he donned a clean uniform and hurriedly made his way downstairs not wanting to spend any more time in this house than he had to.

*

During the 15 minute commute Katsuki allowed himself to doze. Something that was much needed after a terrible nights rest, morning chores and a brisk sprint to actually catch the train on time.

With his eyes closed he tried to train his mind back to the indifference he exuded on a normal day which was difficult for a change. Besides his mother quite literally dragging him around and fussing over his appearance, he'd had a rude reminder of his new reality.

The first thing he'd seen when he been given his phone was a glaring notification telling him he'd been removed from several group chats, the 'Bakusquad' chats. Why they ever needed more than one was

beyond him. At first he felt at ease. They'd made it as official as they could without interacting with him. He'd could here them loud and clear. He appreciated that they didn't leave him guessing about where he really stood or how to proceed. In fact he's surprised they didn't do it sooner. It was a weight off his shoulders.

Or it had been.

No sooner had he accepted it, was he unreasonably angry at the fact it had been so easy for them to cut him off. It was infuriating, how a group of people he'd come to be so close to had no issue with turning on him. What made it worse was the fact that it had only served to further prove everything the Hag had ever told him about himself. Friends had never come easy to him, and now it seemed they would never hang around either.

Opening his eyes as his stop was announced, Katsuki was met with his own angry reflection in a smoggy window. He didn't look tired, but that was the wonders of a little concealer. The Hag refused to let him leave without it. No surprise that to former model image was everything and his couldn't afford to get any worse.

The more he thought about it the more he dreaded the coming day. Not least of all because he'd have to deal with Todoroki's inability to see sense, or the fact that he'd be completely alone again, but because of all the questions that would no doubt be raised by the sudden change. By Deku... and Recovery Girl.

The red marks across his hands and fingers had long faded but his wrists were another story. In his nightmare fuelled panic he'd earned himself lasting friction burns, red and angry and bruised, they weren't going away in a hurry. His only consolation was having most of the day to come up with a viable excuse for them, several already in mind. That and he's thankful that the Hag hadn't left any other lasting marks this time. He'd rather that no one learned the lengths his mother went to just to keep him in line. It was embarrassing.

Arriving to class on time for the first time this week, he chose not to pay heed to anyone. Deciding instead to act like everything was normal, unchanged, seemed like the most *him* way to react to it. He wouldn't waste his time worrying about people who weren't making any effort to understand him. Katsuki had chosen to believe he'd be better off without them. Less distractions and more time to focus on honing his own skills, on making himself better.

That said, when the rest of 1-A began to slowly trickle in Katsuki couldn't help but look with each new arrival, hating the way his heart would race and his palms would sweat when one of the former squad showed up.

Deep down, he could say he was hopeful. Wishing that the events at lunch were just another nightmare. That Icy Hot was the only problem he had to deal with. But like he'd expected, given their warnings the day before, they didn't even give him the time of day. They preferred to deposit their belongs at their own desks before crowding around Ashido, i.e. the furthest one from him. Didn't even glance his way.

Well... at least they were consistent in more than just their stupidity. Nothing he hated more than people being inconsistent. No guess work meant an easier time adjusting, or rather getting back to how things should've been. He'd been weak to let them get close in the first place. He wasn't going to make that mistake again.

Classes carried on like normal. With only a few days left of term the faculty of UA had chosen to spend the time giving a not-so brief introduction to the New Hero segments planned for next term. Aizawa made sure to make it abundantly clear it wouldn't be getting any easier, and the camp would be the beginning of a more intense training regime. One that would have them begging for the easy days.

Most of them moaned, but just the idea of gruelling training, of the will-breaking routine Aizawa had planned for them, had Katsuki close to buzzing with excitement. In his life he had come to be a true believer in the saying '*no pain, no gain*'. Everything was an opportunity to push the limits and go beyond. To improve and get better. As was the school motto, *Plus Ultra*. If he wasn't soaked in sweat and feeling an uncomfortable burn afterwards it wasn't worthwhile. That delight he felt at testing himself was only a fraction of what he was feeling at the mere possibility of spending a few weeks away from home. Away from his *loving* parents. Pure bliss.

Still, in spite of the rising anticipation there was the constant distraction from the burn in his wrists. Vastly different from the aches gained from exercising his Quirk. There was also the looming expectation of what might happen today. Of whether or not he'd be able to get through it without an incident.

He was able to keep focus though, only just. Through sheer will and determination, Katsuki occupied his mind by honing in on his Sensei's tired drone and set to copying out his words in his notebook. He felt

like he needed to be doing something, anything, just to keep his mind off... other things. His leg trembled with a nervous energy he'd rather not acknowledge. Soon enough, he had pages filled of what some might call useless information, but for Katsuki it would be valuable in helping him find perspective.

The morning dragged on, and all he desired was for it to end. No so he could go home, but just so he didn't have to be here, in a class that was brimming with unspoken tension that nagged at his sixth sense. He was acutely aware of Todoroki still watching him like a hawk, of the cold shoulders turned his way in place of welcoming smiles. Easy enough to ignore when he found the resolve and boy did he find the resolve. This tension however... it was something else, something more than what he could see.

Katsuki brushed it all off in lieu of making himself not care. It's not like it could get any worse.

*

Lunch finally arrived and he moved on instinct. Before he knew it he was in the cafeteria considering his options. Ravenous and in a comfortable daze he queued, finding it all too easy to ignore the few classmates ahead of him. Katsuki makes no move to leave, even when Ashido for the first time that day looks right at him; a sharp glare that would probably kill if that were a thing (probably was in a world full of Quirks).

None of them, no one of the class (not even Deku!) had tried to speak to him. Of course that wasn't for lack of trying. Any time the Nerd seemed he might be getting ideas his attention was drawn elsewhere, or in some cases, he was literally pulled away. Katsuki has no one to say it to, but he's thankful. No Deku mean no problems, and that means everyone can continue to leave him alone. Thank fuck. It's literally too good to be true, but if things keep up this way he's sure he'll manage.

Seeing the lunch options, he can't suppress the feeling of nausea that comes with it. The mere thought of food suddenly wasn't appetising, regardless of the complaints his stomach was making. He opts for a small sushi bento; light and nutritious enough to prevent him from passing out at least.

By no true fault of his own, he wanders toward the usual table only the faces that greet him aren't familiar. Then he remembers... it hits him again like a 'Detroit Smash' and he already he's seething. *Stupid, stupid, STUPID!*

Turning back he sees them. All sitting together at a table next to the Dekusquad, eating and laughing among themselves without a care in the world. As if it were something they'd been doing forever. Seeing that, he's amazed he was able to just accept the quiet normal this day has been filled with, let alone deal for so long with it in silence.

For a moment he falters, thinks about being obnoxious, about sitting close to them or worse sitting down right beside them. But the cafeteria is oddly busy today, and he's quick to recall he chose to carry on without them. The imaginary scenario of himself waltzing up and flipping their table was satisfying enough and much less 'Fury of Aizawa' inducing too.

He wanders back to Homeroom (ignoring the amorphous yellow and lightly snoring lump on the floor by the teacher's podium) and settles back at his desk, more than content to review his notes while slowly consuming his bento. The notes where in fact complete gibberish in most instances, it difficult to call them notes. What begins as neatly drawn kanji quickly devolves into muddled and misplaced strokes, completely illegible without a fine eye to translate. So that's what he did.

Katsuki reviewed his mess and set about fixing what he could with what he remembered. It was relaxing in so many ways he'd forgotten. Not having the anxiety of impending social interaction, not having to listen to stupid stories or stupid questions and stupid shit... Like he wants any of that. Though he supposes that anxiety would a darn sight better that whatever nothingness was currently roiling in his knotted guts.

His stomach growls as he finishes his bento, and he growls in turn.

It's annoying, he knows he's hungry, and yet not hungry at the same time. Until yesterday he'd never had a problem with eating. Even after all the messing around with food at home, he was never this turned off the act. He'd always rush to have his fill after a long weekend of starving or several nights of half-portions. But these last few days... Being too tired made it a *little* understandable. Add the stress from yesterday (which was enough to put him off eating curry for life apparently), and it seemed like that was all it took to make eating in

general difficult and borderline impossible.

The sushi was already threatening to make a reappearance. Not that's he'd let it.

He'd get over it soon enough. He had to if he were to keep in peak condition. Just the thought of what the Hag would say was motivation enough.

He got himself comfortable, scrolling through his phone and adding further notes. The quiet was nice. Jarring and not at all what he was used to at this time of day but it was nice. Not nearly as calming as he recalled it should be. Maybe if he had something else to work on... someone to talk to...

No! It's better this way!

Yeah, that's right. He'd be fine. He's been alone for years now, this wouldn't be any different.

*

Lunch carried on. Aizawa is still snoozing, wrapped in that hideous yellow sleeping bag and Katsuki keeps himself occupied, searching up some foreign concepts the teacher had mentioned and downloading the recommended reading ahead of time. Hero Laws and Ethics were going to be a big focus apparently. He made a mental note to read up on it over the break, doing his own research had always helped solidify concepts for him.

He's head deep in his notebook, having found a particularly good article among the mess of results of his browser, when something hits the back of his head. It's a knee-jerk reaction, his eyes snap up and he's standing, angry and ready to throw something a thousand times the weight back at whoever it was that dared to enter his space right now. There aren't many people here yet, so they're easy to spot. Dekusquad, minus their titular member and one Candy Cane are in the far corner.

When did they even get here?

Roundface is snickering like she'd just heard the funniest thing ever

even if she's getting admonished by Four-eyes. Birdbrain and Arms-for-days are also present but they are quietly sitting at their own desk, tranquil, doing their own thing.

Katsuki has to remind himself he's not looking for a fight, or attention. Or anything from *them*. He's not going to rise to the bait. He just wants a normal school day. Like the one he's been having so far. One where fucking up is impossible and nothing goes wrong. He just had to make it to the end of the day.

He turns away, content for once to just ignore them. It's bizarre how easy it is.

No sooner had he sat back down, does something else hit him. He watches the balled paper roll by his desk, where the first one had settled too. He hears the laughter again, not so concealed as before, and he turns to glare at Roundface. The others, Iida and Asui are standing there, not as invested but looking amused and shaking their heads.

In terms of revenge or whatever this was supposed to be, it wasn't even on the radar of what he'd been expecting. It was trivial, childish, not something he'd expect from an aspiring Hero. Or even someone who supposedly hated him.

"What's so funny?" he shouts at her, not at all bothered if Aizawa hears, that's if the man is remotely conscious at all (the guy can sleep through their noisy Homeroom sessions like the dead). Her laugh only falters for a fraction of a second, Iida beside her watching him; faint rumbles from his motor betray his readiness to intervene. Katsuki had figured the rest of the Nerd's friends would know and of course side with him.

"Oh, was just looking at a funny joke." She answers, a slither of smugness on her tongue. "In fact... I still am."

She makes a point of looking right at him.

Katsuki sighs, vastly unimpressed, finding it unbearably easy to snub. He's just holding back the urge to push her to the extreme, anything that isn't... whatever that was. What is she, 12? He's been called far worse by people far more important to him. He does her the honour of lifting the scraps she'd thrown at him. Fully intent on cremating them straight up, he pauses upon spying the handwriting, *-don't look!-* but curiosity gets the better of him.

Don't look you idiot! What are you?! A masochist? Do you like doing this to yourself! Stop!

He wishes he heeded that little voice in his head, as the kanji for *Villain* and *Bully* greet him, along with a crudely drawn caricature of himself with spikey teeth and bound in chains.

She's watching, he knows she is, looking and waiting for a response. Waiting for him to explode. He wants to. Wants to get up and refute it so badly, wants to make sure she knows just how meaningless it is. Instead he crumples the pages together even more and feels a satisfying euphoria as an annoyed look graces her face when he lights them up for good measure.

A euphoria that's quickly smothered.

"No Quirk use in the classroom Bakugou." Comes Aizawa's tired groan as the Hero stands, still cocooned in yellow and looking uncannily like a human caterpillar.

"Yes, Sensei..." Katsuki drones in response, holding back a snarl at Roundface's even louder, more obnoxious giggle. Maybe exploding at her would have been the better option, he'll never know.

Soon enough everyone is streaming back in. And once again Katsuki is set on ignoring the ex-squad who are now pinning with him angry glares. And in an instant his mind is rushing, *what the fuck now?*

Is his calm acceptance not enough for them? Do they want him lash out and scream bloody murder?! Hell, he would but can't really afford another black mark on his record. Or is that what they want? Fuck he doesn't know and trying to make himself not care is making his head hurt. This is why he doesn't do people, or *friends*, they're confusing and frustrating, more trouble that they're worth.

For the next hour Aizawa sets independent work, wanting them all to be present when he discusses the meetup arrangements for the camp and leaving it for the end of the day. Not long now.

Katsuki, however, can't manage to get himself focused again. His brain instead trying and failing to concentrate on the many conversations around him instead of the filled pages before him. Paranoia making him believe every laugh and throw away comment is directed at him. He doesn't dare look up, he doesn't want to see the betrayal in Kirishima's eyes if he glances over, nor the resolution in Todoroki's should he feel the need to look back.

His insides are gnawing away at him, and he doesn't know how to stop it. There's no obvious way to dispute their beliefs, when confronting them will just make things worse. But sitting alone and ignoring it just isn't working. Was this how Deku felt? All those years, spent wondering what went wrong and how to fix it? Years spent twisting in agony because of what Katsuki had said?

He remembers all the times he hurt Deku, the pain in his eyes and the awe too that kept the shitty twerp coming back. Katsuki knew it would all come back to bite him in the ass, but not quite like this. It's poetic in a way, he supposes.

His efforts to not think about it are thwarted so easily he almost laughs himself. Why couldn't they just understand that it was in the past? Why couldn't anyone just fucking *understand*? It wasn't difficult, it wasn't freaking rocket science. He wasn't that person anymore, he was working to get better, to *be* better. Heck, he'd stopped purposefully seeking out the stupid Deku after he'd the whole Sludge Villain fiasco. It was easier than saying thank you, than admitting he needed the help.

Katsuki wanted and needed to be better. How else would he live up to everybody's expectations? His own too. How else could he be a Hero? How else would he ever be ready to say 'sorry'?

He just wasn't ready. Wasn't good enough... yet.

*

The clock at the head of room counted down the seconds to his check-up. He waits until he sees a floating uniform saunter back before standing and making his own short trip to the infirmary.

As Katsuki walks he's tries to keep his mind as blank as he can. It's hard though, clearly impossible the more he tries. It had been so easy, until lunch. Until Roundface broke her way through the fragile mirage he'd created around himself, just to remind him how terrible he is. All he can hear now is the Old Hag, her voice chanting in his head an endless loop of '*I told you*'. It threatens to spark a fresh headache. His overthinking is only making it worse too.

He arrives quicker than he'd anticipated. Recovery Girl has a private

room set up, adjacent to the main medical office. Katsuki marches in, opening the door with unnecessary force that somehow doesn't startle the old lady. Almost like she expected it.

"Hello again, Bakugou. If you'd like to take a seat." The small Hero hobbled over to him, cane in hand, and passed him a short questionnaire. "Fill that out while I get a few things set up."

Katsuki took the clipboard, making sure to maintain his scowl of indifference. In his mind he'd expected this to not be much different from the usual annual health checks they did in middle school. He wasn't surprised the fitness assessments weren't included though, considering all the running around they do anyway. The questionnaire, that was the exact same. The same questions used over and over. Name, age. Any conditions that run in the family? No. Taking any medication for terminal and/or temporary illness not yet disclosed? No. Any other concerns? Also no. Over in a flash.

He signed and left it aside for the Healing Hero to collect. She reviewed it, ticking off a few boxes on her own digital clipboard, as she asked him to remove his shoes and blazer. He does as told with no complaint.

The next thing he knew he was getting measured and weighed. Recovery Girl frowned as he stepped off the scales.

"What?" he scowled at her, brow raised in question. *What now? What else is wrong with me?*

"You've lost weight since the beginning of the year. Anything we should be worried about?" she stares at him. Her old eyes scanning every inch of him.

"No." he answers plainly, and probably too fast if her disbelieving look is anything to go by.

Not eating properly for a few days shouldn't cause that much difference right? He'd be on track again soon anyway.

"No reason at all?" she pressed.

Just tell her you're a piece of shit and get it over with. No one needs to worry about you anyway.

Wow, what the hell, his mind had just offered that up like it was nobody's business and he was actually concerned by how it seemed so

genuine to him in that moment. He brushes it off as best he can with the tiredness starting to get the better of him.

He can't exactly just say that to her face, that'd only raise more suspicion.

"Stress?" he offers up, sarcastically, exaggerating his own disbelieving look. As if to suggest *what else?*

The old Hero nodded, somewhat reluctantly, and carried on. "I always say they put too much pressure on you first years, and they never listen. With the Villain's they really should take my suggestion more seriously. Make sure you use the break to rest up before the camp. No crazy workouts. Yes?"

He nods in agreement, not really in the place to argue with a medical professional, but what he does outside school is his own business.

He hides the panic well as she checks his blood pressure. The rolled sleeves of his shirt do nothing to hide the obvious red and swelling rings around his wrists, but so far Recovery Girl hasn't mentioned it.

"Lower than average but I *know* that's normal for you." She announces, striking off a box on her chart.

Low blood pressure, an effect of the nitroglycerin like product he sweats. His body makes up for it with the high levels of adrenaline. A sudden drop in either can be fatal. He'd almost died for the school to learn that little fact. And he'd be the one scolded for it. Even though it was his parents responsibility to fill in the medical forms.

When she was just about finished and seemed happy with the results, she spoke again. "I'm going to take a blood sample if that's okay with you? To check the levels of nitroglycerin and adrenaline?"

"Do whatever you have to." He huffed.

"Shouldn't take a moment. Could you wash your hands for me, dear." He does as she asks while she brings about the small testing kit. He watches with piqued interest as she sets it all up and the gentle prick the side of his finger is barely noticeable despite the blood beading. "Now, press your finger right there. Brilliant."

A series of numbers and abbreviated words cascade down the small screen and with perfect understanding the Hero began to record them down. It quiet, only the scratching of pen on paper breaking it.

“You’re being awfully quiet today.” He ignored her at first, only huffing, but then she carried on and it got a whole lot harder. “If you’re struggling in any way...”

“Tch. I’m fine.” Katsuki snaps. Because he has to be fine. He can’t be anything else.

She only sighed at his sudden defensiveness. “Of course. I know I already asked but... any aches or pain?”

He glared, knowing to react any other way would get him in trouble. His wrists were aching but that was his own doing so blaming her was just stupid. He didn’t need any help in fixing that when it was what he deserved.

“I told you no already!”

She fixes him with a concerned stare. He stops himself from storming out, “The hell do you want me to say?! I’m fucking fine, alright!”

She pursed her lips (most likely not appreciating the swearing). He crossed his arms, ignoring the discomfort, and restrained himself from lashing out further. God why was existing so goddamn hard these days. He kept his eyes trained on the laminate floor.

“Bakugou...” she hummed, almost pitying. There was tense quiet as she waited for any sound from him when none came she carried on; a serious professionalism and judging in her tone. “There are bone markers present in your blood. That would suggest a break, or a fracture at the very least. Are you sure you don’t feel anything?”

He felt his chest constrict. A fracture? He really, truly didn’t feel any of it, sure his wrists ached but it couldn’t be so bad to be a break. That would hurt way more, he knew what a broken bone felt like, and it hurt like a bitch. When injuries were commonplace for him it was easy to ignore the discomfort that went with it. So even if it did hurt it wasn’t going to bother him, much, it was more like having a mild headache or a stitch in his side. Nothing worth worrying about.

“Tch. Nothing I can’t handle.”

“Come with me.”

He frowned, this wasn’t meant to last any more than a 15-20 minutes, shouldn’t he be done already?

“Why?”

“To get an x-ray.”

“Heck no. I told you I’m fine!”

“Bakugou fractures and breaks are not to be taken lightly. Bad healing can lead to worse breaks later on. Irreparable damage in some cases. You of all people should know this.”

The hell is that supposed to mean?! Why can't adults just say what they mean for fuck's sake?!

He resisted the urge to shout and ended up huffing like a pouty child. He'd had all day to think of cover for, an excuse might just help him here.

“My shoulders and wrists. They take the brunt of my explosions so, maybe, there.”

With no further words Recovery Girl set to examining his wrists. Pausing only to look up after catching sight of the red lines marring them. Perhaps they weren't that obvious if it took this level of scrutiny for her to notice them.

“My gauntlets.” He explained. “They're heavy.”

Her expression was suspicious to say the least as he waited for her to reprimand him for something, literally anything. There hasn't been a day gone by in this school where someone hasn't scolded him for something. With a nod she continues, but murmurs that he should get them adjusted if that's the case. When she's done she announces no breaks, so light fractures it is. She turns away to write down her findings.

The next moment wet lips were pressed against his cheek and a sudden wave of exhaustion washed over him.

“Gah! Gross!” He slurred under the effects of her Quirk. Oh how he hated this.

“Next time you feel any discomfort, *any at all*. You come straight here, Bakugou. If I find you didn't, there'll be hell to pay. Do you understand young man? You are training to be a Hero and to take care of others you must first learn to care for yourself.”

He nodded. Too tired, and genuinely intimidated, to answer any other way.

“Good. Now, go rest.”

“I don’t-“

“Bakugou. It wasn’t a suggestion.”

He knew better than to argue with her. They were both just as stubborn as each other. Sighing he stood, snatched up his shoes, coat and swiftly left the room. He stumbled towards the nearest bed and swiftly face-planted the sheets.

It wasn’t any more than a few seconds. He was so close to passing out entirely, before the peaceful quiet was ruined.

“Kacchan?”

Katsuki didn’t even have the energy to be mad. He could only just about manage the groan which sounded more pained than angry.

“Kacchan?! Were you hurt? Are you okay?”

“Piss off Deku.” He droned into the sheets. His heart is pounding in his chest.

“Midoriya. Come on through please.” Recovery Girl called from the private room.

Katsuki didn’t have to see it to know the nerd was hesitating, arguing over whether he should obey or press the issue.

After a few quiet moments reluctant footsteps moved away and soon their voices were muffled behind a closed door. He rolled onto his back and stared at a stark white ceiling, lights burning odd shapes into his vision. He blinked, slow and lazy. It was unbelievable how much energy had been taken just to fix something so small. Maybe it was worse than the Hero had suggested. Maybe he was just that weak that something this insignificant could have him out for the count.

Or if you remember it’s because you’re dead on your feet from not sleeping right last night dumbass!

Ah, yeah. He forgot. Well, he made himself forget. He’d made an art out of forcefully removing the distasteful from his mind; too bad the fail rate was higher than the success. He chuckled, a quiet dying sound

that faded quickly as his heavy eyelids shut and he slept.

*

“Of course it was you!”

Katsuki darts up instantly, steeped in a drowsy rage and glaring in the direction of the offending voice. It’s only brief but he could swear he saw the Hag. Instead, he’s greeted by the sight of the small fry Grapehead frowning up at him. Behind him by the door, stands Ponytail, Momo; looking as unsure of whether she should be there as Katsuki feels about the whole situation.

“We’re behind schedule now! Because of you! What did you even do? Blow up the test equipment? Jeez! The only good thing about this is getting to wait with Momo.”

Mineta had since hopped onto the adjacent bed, his overzealous eyes drifting back to Momo who was hugging the wall at the exit, he was patting the space beside him.

Katsuki sharpened his glare at the shorter boy, who seemed to preoccupied with his leering to notice. Growling out a grunt, Katsuki flipped his legs over the side of the bed clutching his head. Another headache, just great. He would really rather be sleeping right now.

“You really aren’t as great as you say you are. You know?” Mineta suddenly remarks. Katsuki had to wonder if he guy had a death wish.

“Mineta-kun... don’t provoke him.” Momo pleaded. At least *she* had the sense to not to rile him up.

They’d never really interacted, but he’d always been blown away by her Quirk. What wasn’t impressive about making almost anything out of nothing? He was more confused by her lack of confidence in her abilities. He’d be milking up that praise every chance he got with a Quirk as versatile as hers.

“Don’t worry, Momo. Recovery Girl’s sapped him dry. Our class *Beast* couldn’t fight back if he wanted to.”

Katsuki raises a hand, lets his palm spark off, pop after pop of small

explosions. It's not so easy to hide the fact that it's taking all he's got just to do this and not pass out but he manages. "You want to test that theory?"

That shut the Grape up.

A few minutes later Deku exited the exam room. Chipper as always, and like the saint he was he held the door for the purple midget who was still trembling in his rush to get away. When Katsuki felt Deku hovering he snapped a well-deserved *fuck off* at him and rolled back on to the bed.

"Kacchan..." the Nerd sighed. He took a breath before continuing, voice clearer and more forceful. Resolved. "Recovery Girl asked me to help you back to class. I-if you're up to it... that is?"

Katsuki peeked up at him with one eye. The intense glow of determination on the nerd's face... it was nauseating.

"I said... Fuck. Off. Deku."

Awkward silence followed. Then, "I'll wait until you're feeling better."

He can only assume Deku took a seat beside Momo, who had closed the distance easily in his presence; the two of them quietly conversing. All the while Katsuki just lay on the bed he'd claimed, scowling at the wall before directing that same scowl at a terrified Mineta when he came out 15 minutes later. The intended effect was immediate. The little pervert ran for it, didn't give them a second thought. What a Hero he'd end up being.

Still probably better than you!

Katsuki winced at the thought.

Being the gentleman he was, Deku rushed to catch the door for Ponytail. When she finished that'd be them all checked and (hopefully) all cleared for camp.

"You feel up to walking yet Kacchan?"

"I already told you to fuck off Deku!" he shouted, so loud there wasn't a doubt it wasn't heard in the next room. He quietened, just a bit, just enough to keep himself expressing unbridled irritation. "I don't need your shitty help to fucking walk."

Deku just stared, his intense green eyes showing a faint glimmer of the past fear and apprehension that was quickly doused by the more commonly occurring determination. A small, nervous smile appeared on the Nerd as he walked to the door.

“Let’s go then.” Deku turned back to him, “If you don’t need my help then you can at the very least walk *with* me. Right?”

Fuck him. Seriously, just fuck him. If Katsuki could rid himself of Deku about half his problems wouldn’t *be* problems. In fact Deku is probably the biggest problem he has.

“Would you just fuck off already!”

“Did you hit your head? Is that the only thing you can say now?” he dared to joke. At least he had the decency to not look smug about it. Even more decency to squirm at the angry glare pinning him in place. Didn’t make Katsuki feel any better about his bluff being called so damn quickly, but what else could he expect from this Quirked up fucking Deku. The bastard who was always being pushed around was starting to push back and Katsuki wasn’t going to take it lying down.

Katsuki got up in an attempt to face him. But he moved too fast, vertigo stunning him in his tracks. He stumbled but caught himself before falling completely. When warmth surrounded him his body had the audacity to feel relaxed, even as he was helped to stand straight.

Deku was right beside him, hands firm yet gentle on his arms, supporting him. Katsuki stood to face him and paused. It was always like this. As far back as he can remember this (formerly) scrawny, weak ass Nerd was always there to help when he fell. Even during the darkest times, Deku would look past any grievances and run, teary-eyed and snotnosed, to his rescue. This Quirkless, sappy, pathetic Nerd. What did he have that Katsuki didn’t? Why did everybody who met him instantly love him? Why was he always there to witness Katsuki fail?

“Uh... Kacchan?” Deku urged, shaking him gently. Katsuki realised then he’d been staring, more glaring, stunned and bewildered like a deer in the headlights, right into Deku’s eyes for fuck knows how long now.

Deku himself stumbled when Katsuki shoved him away. “Get off me stupid Deku!”

Slipping his shoes on, he objectively ignored the rushed concerned

babble behind him; and the dizzy wave threatening to floor him. Only a few strides later and the room was spinning. But the same strong, warm hands helped him. Katsuki fought to stay standing without them.

“Get off!”

Together they wrestled, like toddlers over a favourite toy.

“K-kacchan! Stop being so... so...”

“So what? Just fucking say it!” Katsuki snapped, teeth snapping, if Deku was holding him any closer he’d end up biting him for real.

The Nerd struggled a moment, internal conflict washing over his expression, before resolving to give him a response. “So difficult! Would you really rather crawl back to class?!”

The two of them froze. Deku realizing his tone might have sealed his fate and Katsuki legitimately stunned. This... this was something Katsuki would never, *ever* get used to. Deku talking back. It was a foreign phenomenon that was occurring more and more. Even during the exam earlier in the week, Deku had been talking back, questioning his plan, making him doubt himself. Something else to add to the pile of confusing shit in his life lately.

Pinpointing when it started, that was easy, it was after the Sludge incident. After Deku discovered his holy grail of a training regime. Things changed and Deku was no longer the same quivering idiot. Katsuki had thought it was the fact the Nerd had been the one to save him that day, that the ego boost had gone to his head. But as time went on he quickly realised it wasn’t just that. And the more it happened, the more Deku stood his ground, the more lost Katsuki felt. It was like the one constant in his life was vanishing, now along with everything else too.

Katsuki glared at the floor between them, refusing to let the blur at the edges of his sight to be seen. So much time had passed that even Ponytail was done with her check-up.

Shocked by their presence Momo only stopped a gawked; Katsuki half limp and fuming, still in Deku’s hold, and Deku just watching him and waiting for something.

“Is everything alright, Midoriya? Can I help?” She was quick to offer aid, conveniently overlooking Katsuki.

Katsuki had to wonder if she knew too. Was that why she was still there, hovering three feet away from them. On edge and treating him like a wounded animal that would snap if she got too close.

Deku was quick to decline her offer probably sensing how agitated Katsuki was getting.

“Thank you Momo-chan, but Kacchan was just... uh, finding his feet. Go on ahead. We’ll catch up.”

Katsuki could see the apprehension dripping from her... oh he was certain now, she definitely knew. She didn’t want to leave Deku alone with him. Fucking Icy-Hot had told her too. Who else knew then? Did everybody fucking know?!

That look only got worse when Katsuki pushed himself away from the Nerd, her stance battle ready despite him only moving to rest against the wall. It was like she was expecting him to do something extreme right in front her.

What exactly was Todoroki telling people?

“If you’re sure... I’ll see you in class Midoriya-kun.” She relented and gave Katsuki one last wary look before disappearing out the door.

Alone again, they were silent. Katsuki managed to find the energy to stand straight. He’d mildly underestimated Todoroki’s willingness to employ the rest of the classmate, and just how easily they’d turn on him. No point crying about it now, all he could do was carry on and deal with as it. He tried another few steps only to stumble again in the doorway.

“Kacchan, please. I... just until we get back to class? You’ll have your energy back by then I’m sure. Then you can walk in and no one has to know.”

“Whatever. Shitty Deku.” He growled, conceding just a fraction. Why delay the inevitable any longer? “Let’s fucking go already.”

With that, Katsuki tentatively allowed Deku to slip his arm around his waist and off they went. As they walked, Katsuki felt more and more awake and not to mention surprised by the lasting quiet. Before long he walking just fine on his own, thankful to have the hands off him no matter how necessary they might have been. It was nice, the silence, that is until Deku decided to open his big mouth.

“Why did Recovery girl need to use her Quirk on you?”

Katsuki groaned, making his annoyance known with as little effort as possible.

“It’s just... it must have been bad for her to use it, right? Are you overworking yourself again?” he only paused to gasp, “Did-“

Deku didn’t get to finish. Katsuki didn’t give him chance. He was snatching the Nerd by his shirt collar and pressing him against the wall, glaring. Any indication he’d been recently drained of most of his stamina was gone.

“K-kacchan!” Deku gasped, surprisingly making no effort to free himself.

“I don’t need you poking your nose into anything. So stay the fuck out of it and the fuck away from me! It’s none of your business anyway, Deku.”

He kept his fist clenched around his collar, glaring daggers into the glassy green of Deku’s eyes. He was aiming not to do this anymore, he’d been successful (more or less) but Deku made it so god damn difficult sometimes. It was like growing up together and learning all of Katsuki’s buttons wasn’t enough, he had to poke and prod until he got some reaction even if he was warned not to.

The thought crossed his mind that perhaps Deku was craving the attention as much as he was.

The rage flickered and faded away in a heartbeat, leaving him with a strange hollow, anxious emptiness. He felt like he should still be angry. This was Deku, stupid Deku who was always butting in, who was always there when *something* happened, the one person he needed to say sorry to but could never make the words leave his mouth. Understanding *why* Deku made him feel this way was harder than solving advanced maths, and Katsuki loved maths, he was great at maths. So why the fuck was solving this Idiot so freaking hard, how had he known the idiot for his entire life and still not know?! Why couldn’t he just leave him alone?

“Listen here, Deku.” Katsuki started, calm as he could get, better to make his place clear now than wait for the inevitable shitstorm.

Deku’s eyes widened as he readied himself. Katsuki was about to continue, when the same green eyes linked to his darted to the side,

growing wider still. A warm hand grabs his own collar pulling him away. The next thing Katsuki knew he was being shoved into the opposite wall and was face to face with Half and Half. The never changing blank expression but with furious, burning eyes carrying a tell-tale warning. Katsuki swears he saw a flicker of flame as the boy put himself between them.

“Todoroki-kun!” Deku squeaked, close to scolding when he heard the thud of Katsuki’s back hitting the wall.

“Go on to class Midoriya.” Todoroki urged. Not once did his gaze leave Katsuki.

Katsuki was too stunned to even react like he normally would at first. Not to mention the fatigue was setting in again. Stubborn as ever Deku stayed where he was, a move Katsuki could have predicted even without seeing his exasperated face.

“Piss off Icy hot!” Katsuki growled forcefully removing the offending hand.

When the two of them just glared at each other Deku just had to get further involved.

“It’s okay Todoroki-kun. I was being nosey. I overstepped.” He spoke bashfully, looking guilty and yes on some level it might be the truth but Katsuki knows *he* overreacted too. He didn’t have to get physical, and from an outsiders perspective it would obviously look worse than it was.

“Go on, Midoriya. I need to speak with Bakugou. Alone.”

“Alone? About what?! Kacchan?”

Scoffing, Katsuki scuffed his shoes on the floor and managed to get himself standing tall again. “It’s none of your business, so just fuck off already! Starting to think you’re deaf as well as dumb.”

He walked off a few timid steps back on the path they just came. While Todoroki argued, although coolly, with Deku behind him.

Katsuki felt furious for not being able to adhere to the simple task of staying away. Always a fucking failure. Granted, he knew it wasn’t his fault and it was never going to be easy with Deku always fucking there when he turned around. Still, this probably could have been avoided.

Yeah if you hadn't fucked up your exams or annoyed the Hag! None of this would have happened if you could just do anything right!

His fists clenched in his pockets again Katsuki tried not to hear that voice in his head. Just stay calm. Ignore all the bullshit, ignore Deku and Icy Hot and... everyone else too?

With the potential that everyone would now be on his case, it felt like another level of impossible.

Looking back at the last few hours, things had been quiet. Far too easy. Everyone must have been working together. They'd done their bit, kept Deku away. Katsuki had kept to himself, content in the peace and quiet, and had only been mildly annoyed by Uraraka's petty paper throwing jab. It was almost too convenient now that he thought about it, too much like things were going his way, he should've known, things never go his way. He'd been so fucking stupid, assuming that everybody already knew was the first thing that should have crossed his mind.

But no. Instead he'd been an idiot and let himself believe it would be that simple, as if.

His snappy quips and jests, his crude Nicknames (that really did hold no spite) he could count on them being taken more literally by everyone, his natural resting bitch face too. Watching his impulsive nature for an overprotective Dekusquad was one thing, holding himself in front of everyone for the rest of his time at UA? That was going to be more exhausting than his workouts at this rate.

What am I thinking? I don't have to change just to suit them, they're the ones with the problem! They're the extras that don't fucking understand jackshit. That won't take the time to understand!

The whispering stopped behind him. When he turned Deku was walking away, but not without glancing back a few times.

Todoroki waits until he's certain the hall is empty. Icy Hot speaks not turning to even look at him.

"I told you to stay away from him."

Getting back on the defensive is all too easy, especially with how repetitive the asshole is getting.

"Tch. I told you it was him you need to be saying that to! Moron. Shit

like this doesn't work one way!"

Katsuki didn't have the will or want to offer up something as simple as an explanation. It wasn't like he'd be listened to or understood if he just said it was Deku who wouldn't stay away from him. Even attempting to enlighten the half and half bastard would be a complete waste of his already scant energy. Not something he could afford to waste when he didn't know what he was returning to.

"And if you grab me like that again I'll kill you!" he added, instantly regretting his choice of words but too full of pride to correct himself or elaborate on his meaning.

He stormed away, silently fuming. Icy Hot didn't stop him, nor did he follow immediately but when he did it was clear he wanted Katsuki to know he was there. The usually quiet steps of his were much louder. Katsuki walked all the faster just to get away. He wasn't running, was just eager to get this day over with suddenly.

Katsuki walked into class, a brief silence coming over those that were there when he stepped in. Aizawa was gone. The extras all watched him as he crossed the room; those that were curious enough anyway. And boy did it make him feel sick. He hadn't felt this level of anxiety since they had to pick their Hero names and announce it to the class; his remaining undecided after Midnight continued to reject and offer zero direction for a better option. An attention seeker he was not, but it seemed to land on him regardless.

He sat allowing them to glare metaphorical daggers at him under the guise of subtlety. He'd rather that than give himself even a whiff of a chance at blowing up and making things worse for himself. He knows what it had looked like. His knuckles straining around Deku's collar, like he was gearing up to beat the shit out of him. He wasn't. He wasn't like that anymore, not unless the training calls for it but now that might also be a problem. The fuck was he supposed to do...?

Katsuki tried his hardest not to go too overboard these days. Not like the twerp was going to get any stronger without someone pushing him. The others were too soft. There's soft and then there's non-existent, words can be effective but action always helped to reinforce. Deku was always doing something.

It was only then it dawned on him. Among their scathing whispers was an acute absence of enthusiastic muttering and a pencil scratching paper behind him. A glance over his shoulder and yes, Deku wasn't

there. He didn't want to think about what that might mean. Slumping back in his chair Katsuki tried to block out the mounting stress and nausea but hardly had the chance to when Sero was stood in front of his desk. Kirishima not far behind him.

Katsuki glared up at him. The redhead still so conveniently quiet. Did he have something to say now? No, not by the way he was avoiding eye contact. The Tape Dispenser was eyeballing him defiantly.

"The fuck do you want, Soy Sauce?" Katsuki groaned, already done with the conversation though it hadn't even began.

"It's Sero to you. Now, where's Midoriya?"

"Hah? Why the fuck would I know?! Nerd ran off on his own."

Kirishima's usually soft eyes grew hard and stern as they met his. "What did you do?!"

Katsuki couldn't believe this. It almost made him wish he were a little bit deaf just so he didn't have to deal with it all. It was Todoroki's timely return that truly fucked him over. Just as Katsuki stood to defend himself, something else that surely looked hostile.

"I don't owe you anything Shitty Hair! Get off my back! The Loser isn't here, and don't care where he is either!" he cursed right back. The red head had the gall to look hurt and Sero looked ready to punch him, that is until Todoroki appeared beside them.

With a simple raised hand he had them backing down. It did nothing to calm Katsuki's own electrified nerves.

"Midoriya's fine. I intervened before anything happened. I believe All Might is speaking with him now."

Katsuki couldn't help but snap at him. "The fuck do you mean *intervened*?! Nothing was going to happen!"

"You were holding him by the throat. Nothing happened only because I got there before you had a chance."

"You were strangling him?!" Kirishima balks.

The sound of small explosions filled the room, the scent of sweet burnt smoke polluting the air. Clenching his fists was all he could to hold it back, the explosions heating his already scorching palms. He couldn't

help himself, the asshole was assuming that he could be just that predictable. Assuming that he knew everything, Katsuki wasn't about to let him believe that.

"You think you have me figured out huh? Well you don't know shit, Half and Half! So fuck off already! You really think Deku needs you to defend him?! Well he doesn't. You couldn't defend shit!" Katsuki growled. He was seething, unadulterated rage was dripping off him in waves, smoke rising from his clenched fists. They were standing face to face. Todoroki's expression still unchanged and that only served to piss him off more. Katsuki could swear his teeth were on the verge of snapping from how hard he was gritting them, his jaw aching under the pressure.

"Leave him alone Bakugou!" Uraraka shouted from across the room.

"Or what?! I kicked both your asses before I can do it again!" he snapped reflexively, his eyes staying fixed on Todoroki.

"We'll stop you." Kirishima deadpanned.

It was the lack of the usual calm in his tone, the fury in its place, that made Katsuki look towards him, and it was then Katsuki noticed all eyes were on him. Sure he liked attention (the right kind) as much as the next person, but this... the animosity swelling behind their eyes was unsettling. He did his best to keep his grimace firm but if the flash of a smirk on Todoroki was anything to go by he must have looked as fearful as he felt.

Still pride wasn't going to let him leave it there.

"Whatever. You all want to go against me? Fine, I like those odds!" it was petty, stupid, and a borderline insane, but Katsuki didn't have a signal fuck he could give right now. He'd had been outright ignored all day, he wasn't about to let them walk all over him.

"We *will* stop you. All of us." Momo shouts from behind him and Katsuki doesn't need any more confirmation to know she was the one to call on Todoroki. The determination in her eyes is fierce; looks like the exams helped her find that confidence.

"Do whatever the fuck you want. Just stay out of my way!" He wanted to lash out but knew he shouldn't. He pushed past and was shocked when someone grabbed him and pushed back. The top of the nearest table greeted him and he was doing his best to not just give them what they were expecting.

Katsuki spun to face them, "I said get out of my way."

"Or what? You'll do to us what you did to Deku-kun?!" Ochako asked.

"You don't know shit about it!" he screamed.

"I do. We all do. How you would beat him up, how to baited him to commit suicide. How you've been doing it for years!"

There was a lull, where all the sound made was Katsuki struggling not to explode. If anyone hadn't known, then they definitely knew now.

"You're a Villain. You don't deserve to be here!" she finished.

The quiet was leaden with judgment and Katsuki felt himself slipping further. The sweat gathering in his palms needed to be rid of. He needed to leave.

"I've already warned you twice now, Bakugou. If we have to step in again, I'll make sure you get your comeuppance." Todoroki was leaning right over him.

Then just as quick as it started it was over, he couldn't hold it in anymore. He swung right with a brewing explosion, sending the Half and Half's shirt and getting him away. Katsuki moved towards the exit only to feel hands grabbing and pulling him back. Ice encased his fists as he was forced back into his own desk.

"Fuck you. GET OFF ME!"

The feeling, it was horrible, it brought back so many bad memories. He needed out, he could get out this time! Exploding through the ice, was enough to make the hands leave. The blast hurt, as it might when ice was suppressing it. Suppressed though it was, it was still enough to nearly obliterate his desk.

It was then he decided he'd rather leave than do that dance again, he had to get out. Right when a lethargic Aizawa entered, followed by a mystified Deku.

"Kacchan?"

"What the hell is going on?!" their Sensei shouted. Everyone who was anywhere near him took a step back, giving the stern faced a clear view of the carnage. "Bakugou, faculty office. Now!"

Allowing anxiety of being in room full of people who'd rather see him

hang to drive him, Katsuki angrily followed his teacher out as everyone else returned to their seats, unaffected by the mess they'd made.

He felt sick to his stomach. And hollowness occupying his throat and made it all too easy for the air to slip through him. It was hard to breathe again. This room, this *school*, it was meant to be a safe place... somewhere he could grow and be taught what he needed to learn. A place away from the shitty judgment at home. But this, right now, this was uncannily like being at home and he hated it.

What happened to the school of his dreams? To wannabe heroes and healthy rivalry and... god forbid, fucking *friends*?! UA had been a shitstorm from the onset if anything all UA had been trying to do was hold him back. No, not hold him back. It's been pushing him towards a truth he'd been denying since forever. He was Villain material. Worst of the worst. The more people he heard say it the more likely it seemed. But no, he wasn't going to let it get to him. He was out here to prove them all wrong.

Those bastards, his so-called *Friends*. Having them was different, a new experience. He'd never had someone so on his side that everything seemed possible. He'd had real friends, for the first time in forever.

But they'd turned backs the second it became clear he wasn't a perfect human being. Didn't everyone have something they were ashamed of? He could bet any money at least half of the people in here had a skeleton in the closet. But still, they were many and he was one. Odds were against him, and with the cause of their protective blindness being the one person who couldn't keep his nose out of it... this was a losing battle.

Just like every other battle lately.

All he could do now was try and roll with the status quo, until maybe one day, sooner rather than later, they'd come to just tolerate the fact that he was a piece of shit. That they'd just get on without bothering with him and he'd do his best in return.

He'd never stop being angry though, the rage was the only glue holding him together now.

Still, Katsuki felt like he should fight it a bit more, stand and scream at them that he was more than the retelling of some very poorly chosen words and misplaced fury. He knew his own defensiveness

would be misunderstood even if he tried though.

These people, his classmates... he didn't expect any show of mercy from them. Not with what just happened.

He was fucked, that much was obvious. The hurried steps his Homeroom Teacher just ahead of him told him so. How much shit would he get for this? Would there be any point to tattling on the others when they likely already had a convenient tale crafted just make everything even worse for him if he did? Did he even care? He wasn't sure, his mind was mired in a tired fog and all he desired was some real genuine peace.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully you all are satisfied with that update :) Things are only going to get even worse for Katsuki from here, let me know what you all are thinking :)

This will probably be the only update this month, I have work for uni that needs done first! I've made a gab account, if you want any updates on updates. I'll post there maybe 24hours before i update anytime and advise of delays and the like there too :) Feel free to follow for that ; https://gab.com/French_Fries21

Calm Before the Storm

Chapter Summary

Katsuki finds a few moments of peace.

Chapter Notes

Hi all! I'm back with new update that is remarkably more chill than the previous chapters. There is still references to and actual bullying and of course swearing. We get introduced to few people in this one too :) And also the first of many future perspective changes.

Getting close to summer camp and literally cannot wait to drop all those bombs :D

Love reading all the comments seeing how angry most of you are at the class, don't worry they'll get what's coming... probably :P

As always, i hope this is enjoyable and makes sense! Let me know what you think!

Katsuki's anxiety powered fury waned the second the Teacher's lounge came into view. The brisk pace set by his Homeroom Teacher, which he thought at first would calm him, only served to heighten his growing unease.

The halls were filled with echo of a marching beat and it filled his mind with a pounding dread. With every possible thing that could go wrong sitting right at the forefront, and right next to the indignant voice screaming about how unfair it all was.

Why was he the only one being called out? Why was the Icy Hot fucker sitting back in class like he'd had no part in it, when the chill of his Ice was stilling clinging to him?!

Why did everyone always single him out when things went to shit?!

Because you're the obvious culprit. You have a history of causing problems, so duh, who else would a Hero zone in on?! The fucking Villain of course!

He took a deep breath and looked up at the back of his teachers head. Aizawa wasn't like that though... right? Aizawa didn't jump to conclusions. At least Katsuki had the impression that he didn't. The Pro always took the time figure things out, to try and understand even when Katsuki didn't want to bother explaining. The man's patience was God tier in that regard.

Still, the fact that it was Katsuki alone being ushered into the empty lounge area only served to make that little doubt grow.

The Faculty Lounge was a room he'd never visited before. Any previous "issues" he was involved in had been dealt with on the scene. Or, like when the Hag had dragged him down after the Sport's Festival, in the principal's office. She'd wanted to "*discuss*" everything, and by discuss he means the Hag cussed them out and monopolised on Katsuki's "victim" role to get the best out of it for herself.

She was, of course, quick to remind him he wasn't really a victim. Victims don't deserve the pain they get.

This room in comparison to Nezu's office, was far more calming and welcoming. Not just because the Hag wasn't there. Nor was it the lack of the feeling of authority. It was just how lived in it seemed, how domestic it felt.

There was a long row of side-by-side desks, each partitioned off from the next, each fitted with their own pc and compact filing systems; just enough space to act as a stand-alone office space. A few even had personal photos on display, little knick-knacks to decorate and make the space theirs. It was easy enough to tell who owned which. And he'll admit it, he latched onto the task as a bizarre way to calm himself down.

Present Mic's desk was a disaster scene, pages stacked high and in a vaguely organised way. Katsuki didn't expect anything less from the chaotic, overly energetic, loud Hero. A framed photo of himself and Aizawa sensei (who looked as drab as always) sat right by the monitor, front and centre. Katsuki didn't think much more of it.

All Might's was obvious enough with the tell-tale clues from the mug and other various office supplies in his patented colours. All Might must really love red, blue and gold. The Number 1 Hero having a favourite colour scheme had never occurred to him before. His was one of the tidier looking desks, though Katsuki was sure that was more to do with a lack of paperwork to fill the space than any

organisational skill.

He easily let his gaze skip over Midnight's, obvious from the abundance of leather and metal. He didn't want to know what things she took solace in any more than he wanted to be familiar with her sense of comforting. Which he could say from experience needed a fuck ton of work. And people said he was bad. Midnight's idea of controlling the situation "appropriately" was chaining up a sixteen year old in front a live audience.

He shook his head empty before turning back to his Homeroom teacher. The tired man had settled at his desk and was clearly making quick work of an incident report. While he did that Katsuki took the time to further relax himself and observe his desk too.

Aizawa's desk was not at all what Katsuki had been expecting from a man who looked like he'd never even heard of a hairbrush or a sleep schedule. It was organized, very well organised. Scarily well organised even. Maybe even more organised than Katsuki's own workspace at home by the looks of it. The neatly stacked files and pages were separated by coloured tags, everything had a place. And he meant everything.

Looking back at the man, Katsuki was sorely struggling to connect the desk to its owner.

The teacher spun around to face him and took a moment to just take him in. His gaze stayed low, before rising to fix him with a serious stare. Katsuki swallowed as subtly as humanly possible. Which is to say, not very subtly. All his efforts to stay calm went right out the window.

"Relax." His Sensei started off with, and he fumed at being coddled straight off the bat because despite his efforts to obey it only made the feeling worse. "You're not in trouble, that is unless I find you've done something you should be in trouble for."

The pause, Katsuki assumed, was to give him an opportunity to explain what happened. He let the silence linger on, still too on edge to believe that he wasn't just going to be shit on at a moment's notice. He didn't trust himself not to say something incriminating despite his innocence.

"Alright then. How about I tell you how it looked?"

Katsuki was regretting now that he'd not spoken when he'd had the

chance. He didn't want to hear just how lowly his Homeroom teacher thought of him. Then again, perhaps hearing it from a man he respected would help put his ass in gear? He decided to remain quiet.

"From my perspective, it appeared you got angry about something and decided to use your Quirk to let everyone know about it. That about right?"

He shrugged. Angry wasn't really how he'd felt in the moment, but the truth was just going to make him seem weak. Scared? Terrified? Those weren't words people associated with him, and neither would he.

"Bakugou... If you don't talk to me I can only assume the worst."

Katsuki sighed, he wasn't about to make things worse for himself by the giving him the long winded version. So, he decided, he'd give him the bare bones and nothing more.

"Fine. I tried to leave, they wouldn't let me."

"Why wouldn't they let you leave?"

He shrugged. Nothing more.

"And you exploded your desk because....?"

"It seemed better than exploding any of them." He replied coolly.

Aizawa nodded, simply accepting that it made sense, because it *did* make sense.

A silence fell and Katsuki began to notice a faint but growing ache in his hands. It wasn't painful, more numbing than anything. Odd and tingly, cold. Like pins and needles without the pain if he had to describe it. He didn't dare look away from Aizawa though, as curious as he was to see the cause. It was probably just the residual chill from Icy Hot's Quirk wearing off.

"You should see Recovery Girl about your hands." Aizawa told him after his gaze lowered once more.

"Like hell! My hands are fine! And I'm not going back there again today!"

It was Aizawa's turn to sigh. And Katsuki thought about looking down for a moment to see the cause of his teacher's concern. It wouldn't hurt, but even will a simple quick glance he was more than shocked to

see the ice still persisting and clinging to his blazer cuffs. What little he caught of his hands seemed a state. The Hag hadn't done as much damage ever in all her years correcting him. He was about to take a closer look when the door to the office opened suddenly.

"Eraserhead. A word please." It was Recovery Girl, Katsuki found himself concealing his hands behind his back, lest she go through him for not going to her since he was hurt. It would be overkill to go twice in one day though! He refused to be that damn pathetic.

Aizawa left him with a curt order of '*stay here*', as if he had anywhere else to be.

With ample time to himself, and nothing better to do, he took a closer look at his hands. It was difficult to tell what damage was his own doing or Todoroki's. His palms, the heart of his Explosion, were roaring red. Skin scorched and already starting to peel. His fingers were just as red until he reached the tips were the blue of extreme chill had yet to leave him. The fact that he couldn't feel anything except numb was worrying. The thought that this might affect his Quirk even more so. How would be a Hero without his Quirk?

How could you ever hope to become a Hero when you're so busy failing and making enemies?

Stupid voice in his head, not helpful at all these days.

The door opened again but he was too busy having a quiet meltdown to notice who entered. It wasn't until a calming voice, old and candid called his name.

"Bakugou, let's sit and I'll take a look at your hands. I can't use my Quirk again so soon after the last time. But I can treat them the old fashioned way."

Feeling a little too out of character, with all his silence and being overly obedient, he let out the most indifferent response he muster.

"Whatever."

Without any more fuss or questions, they say and she set too work, pulling whatever she needed out of her curiously large pockets. Burn cream, pocket-size heat packs, bandages, disinfectant. In what was probably record time his hands had the feeling returning to them, bandages wrapped snugly around them in their entirety, pressing a heat pack to his palms to warm him up. She even brushed off the

stubborn ice from his clothes.

All in all it was a pleasant experience one he couldn't remember ever having before.

"Bakugou." He looks up to face her, feeling like he could sleep a thousand years and then some. "Eraserhead has told me tensions between yourself and Todoroki have been escalating lately. Did he have something to do with the injuries I healed earlier?"

Like a switch the mood shifted. "Fu- uh, hell no! That was all my fault."

Whatever subtext she read into that didn't satisfy her. She didn't push it though.

"Alright, can you tell us what happened today?"

Us?

Peering over at his Sensei's desk he saw the man, hunched forward in his chair, elbows resting on his knees, fingers intertwined and looking anywhere but at them. Still intently listening no doubt. He *could* tell them exactly what happened. Tell them that the whole class hated him now. That they literally ganged up on him. That Icy Hot pretty much straight up threatened him. That he lost his shit thinking about all the horrible things they might do and how much he knew he'd deserved it.

But that... it would only raise more questions, like why would they do all that in the first place? How weak was he to have a freak attack over it too? That's not even mentioning that it would be their word against his, all 18 of them (Deku, the idiot, would vouch for him until his dying breath, even if Katsuki had a gun to his head). With Katsuki's track record he doubted his side would ever be held in favour. Nor did it account for the buried fear festering in him over how his Sensei would react if he found out the ugly truth. He's barely managing despite his efforts to ward off the class, if Aizawa ended up agreeing with them too... he didn't want to think about it.

Katsuki dipped his gaze, letting his face settle into a perturbed glower. He wasn't going to make something of this, out of nothing. He'd let the class know just how little they mattered to him now.

"Nothing happened. He's just a nosey bastard who doesn't know when to quit being a nosey bastard." He answered, he made sure to instil

the same amount of ire he'd normally use when talking about just about anything and it seemed to do the trick.

Aizawa sat back and fixed him with a little disappointment. "Regardless, that's still no reason to be using your Quirk outside the Heroics classes. I know you said you were provoked but like I've told you before getting mad won't solve all your problems. I want you to write me an essay no more than 2000 words about Quirk awareness, specifically related to your own Quirk. I'll leave the analysis up to your keen mind."

Katsuki stared at him, trying to ignore the building pressure in his chest. Every fibre in his being was telling him to argue, to tell his Sensei he didn't need any more Quirk Awareness. He was fully aware of the benefits and drawbacks. He'd been so eager to escape the extras in class because of one such drawback.

"When you're ready come on back to class."

As much as he'd love to sit there for the rest of the day, not being anywhere near anyone that might antagonise him, or any green haired idiots that would ask too many questions. But Katsuki wasn't willing to let any of the "slight" vulnerability he felt slip through, standing up and announcing, "I'm ready now, not going to sit around idling for no reason."

"If you're sure."

"Of course I'm sure."

He made to leave, once again settling into the role of follower, when Recovery Girl called out again, "Bakugou, remember what I said, if you need anything at all..."

"Yeah, yeah, *go straight to you*, I heard you first time!" he remarked snidely, only catching the tail end of Aizawa's grimace and shaking head. Just before the door closed behind them, Katsuki paused and spoke again, loud enough for only Recovery Girl to hear.

"Hey, Old Lady."

The Healing Hero looked at him expectantly.

"Thanks."

If the sweet smile on her face hadn't made it all somewhat worth it he

wasn't sure what would.

**

Despite the jarringly calm hour that made up the end of the school day Katsuki was fuming with anger as he left UA. Fucking Tail Guy just had to pass comment as he walked out the door. Funny how every slight against him was timed perfectly so Aizawa wasn't there to see or hear. He was waiting for the day they'd fuck up, see how they liked being called out for their shit.

"If you know what's good for you, you won't come back." The bastard had said to him.

As much as Katsuki would have loved to show *him* what *wasn't* good for him (i.e. saying stupid shit like that and trying his patience) he was in too much of a hurry to just leave the campus. What had started as an inspiring school year was eternally soured and now even just being there was starting to sicken him. But he'd power through it until he either literally dropped dead or was physically removed.

So yeah, he cursed silently the entire way. He was going to again forego the train and walk but he'd only just made it to the station when he realised he was much too tired to walk the long hour plus trek home after his rollercoaster day. Had to wait for the next train as he'd missed the first. It wasn't so bad, all the easier to ignore the looks and whispers when he was nearly sleeping on his feet so he didn't mind.

But then the idleness of the ride left him with plenty of time, time to think about everything and the more he thought the more he wished he could go back and punch every extra in that class in the face repeatedly.

He couldn't believe how fucked up his everyday was becoming. Fucking Candy Cane, Fucking Tail Fucker, fucking asshole classmates! Fucking extras the lot of them! Fuck them! And that dickhead Kirishima being all quiet! Fucker having the gall to look hurt when he doesn't have a fucking clue what's going on! Deku! What the absolute fuck!

Disembarking the train he practically ran, the energy that had built up

just burning to get out! So his walk to home turned into more of an impromptu jog, were he had to literally keep his hands clenched to avoid burning through his bandages.

He should have just blasted the whole room to hell. Should have let them all know how fucked up they were for turning on him so fucking quickly and jumping all the way to the extreme of worst conclusions. He would have expected that, in a class of 20, that at least one person would have asked for more details, asked for his side of the story, but no. Not one of them asked, (Shitty Hair didn't count he hadn't really tried) and like hell he was going to just offer it to them now! They're all pricks! Who the fuck cares if, when he blew them up, he happened to reinforce all their misconceptions in the process. The world would be better off being saved from their stupidity.

He will admit Aizawa showing up, at just the right time, was very appreciated and it filled him with a warring sense of relief and anxiety. The anxiety stemming from the fact that although Aizawa was trying to calmly understand, the man was clearly only just reserving judgement. Katsuki knew well enough now that when shit went down he was first one everyone looked to. The extras were doing it, he saw no reason why his Sensei's wouldn't do it too. Heck, Aizawa-sensei had done so earlier when he pulled out *just* Katsuki. It was something else to look out for, something else on his shitlist.

Fuck! He really just wanted to scream, or cry. Or scream *and* cry. Maybe blowing something up would help, and *then* he could curl up and scream-cry himself to sleep.

Still, at the end of the day he couldn't to complain about something he'd brought on himself. He'd explained as much as he was willing. Which was, perhaps to his Sensei's annoyance, very little.

Getting off with just an essay was shocking. Not even a mention of detention, not until Katsuki brought it up himself, and then Aizawa only responded with the question of whether he actually wanted detention. Of course he didn't, spending a second longer than he had to in that building was like voluntary torture after everything. So, an essay it was. All about the Do's and Don't's of his own Quirk, with unspoken yet explicit reference to using it around people. Easy, and with the last day free of classes entirely he'd be able to get it done without staying any later (like hell he was going to leave until later).

Now, all he had to do was not makes things worse and avoid letting the Hag see his bandaged hands. Any more shows of weakness and

she'd probably lock him in his cell and never let him out again.

Walking up the fine gravelled drive, only just past curfew, he was further upset to see the curly green haired moron sitting on the doorstep. He stood up as Katsuki approached.

"Kacchan!"

His eye twitched at the high-pitched greeting. On reflex his heart sped up and his palms began to sweat, something he could do without with the wrappings still on. He moved quickly reaching the door and shoving Deku out of his way. The sooner he got inside the better, is not something he thought he'd ever be thinking.

"Kacchan, I know you probably won't want to but... can we talk? About earlier?" Deku asked, and Katsuki only cursed more, fucking Nerd already had his answer. He *knew* he wouldn't want to talk so why bother asking?! As his wrapped, sensitive fingers struggled to grip the key, Deku reached to *help*, tch, more like mock. It was more than enough to set him off.

"Don't even try, Deku! I can open a fucking door, I'm not inept!"

"I never said you were Kacchan."

"Tch." *It's what you and everyone else is thinking though.* "The fuck are you even here for?!"

"Like I said, Kacchan, I want to talk."

Katsuki ignored him, more preoccupied with the miniscule relief he felt when the lock clicked and the door opened. The eerie quiet, and darkness that greeted him, had him looking back on the not so small detail he'd overlooked, the driveway was empty.

Where the fuck...?

"Oh, Auntie and Uncle said they'd be away for a few days. I caught them just as they were leaving. Some fashion show in Osaka? Your dad said he was releasing a new line at the showcase."

That sentence, to any other person would be normal, a simple explanation for the clear absence of his parents. But to Katsuki, it was just a reminder of how little he mattered to the man that bore the title of his father.

Deku really didn't have to try hard to make him feel even more worthless. His own father was more interested in talking to Deku than to his own son. More eager to share the things going on in his life with some jumpy ass Nerd who wasn't even related to him. Katsuki couldn't remember ever having that.

The pressure behind his eyes was damming.

How was it that Deku merely showing up at the door, as they were going out, was enough to get his old man talking?! How the fuck was Deku able to get that so fucking easily, when Katsuki had been trying for years in vain to gain that favour without invoking the indifference and inevitable punishment that came with it. The Old Man didn't bother with Katsuki unless the Hag needed him to.

Another tut, and Katsuki was ready to slam the door, he didn't want any more reminders of how much his parents didn't think him worthy of their full attention, not until he proved himself.

"Piss off already." He snapped, swinging the door shut, or well *almost* shut. The Nerd had other ideas, shoving his foot in to block it and coming close to pushing his way in. Asshole just couldn't take a fucking hint!

With no one there to misconstrue his intention Katsuki let the door swing open and caught the Nerd, pushing him back. Deku had the nerve to look taken aback, pressing back against his opposition, clutching his sleeve.

"Kacchan. Please!"

"Go. A. Way. Deku. You just make things worse!" And with one last shove Katsuki pushed him off and slammed the door shut. Ignoring the pleas muffled behind it.

Resting against the hard wood, Katsuki waited until the sound of Deku begging to be heard stopped and then until the crunch of footsteps faded into nothing. It wasn't a short wait, and with the ever present and growing tenacity Deku possessed Katsuki hadn't expected any less.

After some time, a small part of him wanted to open the door just to check that Deku wasn't still lingering at the end of the drive, watching. But with everything else lately, it felt too much like tempting fate. Too much like trusting karma not fuck him over.

Instead, he turned the key and double checked the locks before heading upstairs to his room all the while ignoring the lingering pressure in his eyes, he wasn't going to cry, he wasn't that weak.

Walking into his room was like walking into a different dimension. It felt like a lifetime had passed since last he'd seen these bare walls, though it had only been a little over a day. Even with sparse contents, few shelves and untouched bed, it was a welcome sight. The only evidence of life was his desk still neatly cluttered with textbooks, the noticeboard hung above it just as filled with useful notices and articles highlighted to keep him focused. Just how he'd left it all on Monday morning.

He supposes getting dumped and then outright exiled following a stint in a homemade prison could warp his sense of time to that extent.

Pft. The fuck am I thinking?

It was almost like he'd broken up with a long term partner opposed to the short term, temporary classmates they were. No wait, not classmates, *Extras*.

Katsuki shook them from his head, not wanting to waste another second of his precious free time on them, then proceeded to the shower. He made sure to take his time, much longer than that morning or than was even necessary. Letting the suds soak into his hair and skin he took the time to gently remove the bandaging around his hands to see the barely there remnants of the "ice burn" Todoroki had gifted him.

Of all the things his mother had given him her part of his Quirk, was probably the best. Also, the one he was getting the most use out of these days.

The Glycerin that constantly moisturised her skin and kept her looking young, was present in all the sweat glands of his body too. Just so happened that meant Katsuki too would still be looking fine at 50 and also possessed mildly accelerated healing. Nothing like what specialised Healing Quirks could do. Not even close to what Recovery Girl could achieve either. He couldn't cut himself to the bone and hope to walk away seconds later unscathed. No. His was much more subtle. The kind that reduced small cuts and bruises that should last for weeks, to only lasting a few days.

It's there in the shower that he makes a mental note to write that in his essay. Faster healing wasn't a common known part of his Quirk.

Deku probably knew, weirdo knew just about everything about him. It's why he urges Recovery Girl to just leave him be half the time. He can handle it and he heals faster anyway. Helping him is waste of her time and effort. A greatly appreciated one.

His mind carries on, drafting the paragraphs that would make another good addition to the essay too.

The Nitro in his sweat, came from a bizarre mutation on the Old Man's side. That was also thankfully isolated to just his palms. He didn't want to think about how much harder life would be with explosive sweat everywhere. It was already a pain. Learning how live with it had included a lot of trial and error.

The major issue was doing anything that involved direct hand contact. Like eating with his bare hands, big no, no. He found that out when he was six and his parents had hosted a party with exclusively just finger food. Turns out that while he may be more tolerant to the effects of ingesting Nitroglycerin, he wasn't immune. Took a while but he'd passed out, rather dramatically if how the Hag told it was true (which he sorely doubted). His Nitroglycerin was still toxic, even to him, and if not dealt with properly, it was lethal. So, he had to watch were he put his hands, and clean everything he touched, was why he usually had them tucked away in his pockets.

It was why he was always popping off when he could. Time lead to a build up and then, under the worst of circumstances, a massive boom. Like today in the classroom.

His mood sours quickly just thinking about it, but now in the aftermath he understands why he couldn't hold back. The stress, no not stress... the inability to escape from what should have been a safe place, it sent his fight or flight response well into overdrive. Produced explosive sweat in excessive abundance. Popping off a few small blasts would alleviate that, but in the moment, seeing how they all looked at him, he'd figured that would only make things worse. And it did. Not that it would have went well regardless.

Only when his fingers started to prune did the leave the shower. He dried himself off, rubbing at skin until red and numb to the touch. At least his hands didn't look any different to the rest of him now.

It was nice being able to stomp about and curse out loud. All without the risk of invoking the Hag's wrath. Weird as fuck too. He was able to take his sweet time poking around in the fridge for food, because

there was no way in hell he was touching the leftovers from the other night. He was going to ignore all that bullshit for the next 12 hours if it was the last thing he did.

Grabbing what he needed from the fridge and lifting a small portion of minced pork from the freezer he set about making Mapo Tofu. His way. And that meant with extra chilli paste. It was therapeutic, mincing the vegetables, measuring out the spices. Slicing the tofu into even cubes. He took his time, really let his mind focus on the task at hand and forget everything else. No one to bombard him with insults or correct his mistakes. It was a rare bonus he wouldn't take for granted.

Katsuki was going to lap up every peaceful second he could, because once his parents came back it would be over. So after whatever shit tomorrow brought, he'd bask in the silence at home, train in peace and take the time to do the things he wanted to do, they way and when he wanted to do them.

It would be a more than pleasant start to summer break. Probably the best start he could hope for.

He ate in peace and was able to finish it all too, relishing the heat from the spice on his tongue (and without any struggle to keep it down thank you very much, it was a small victory but much needed). Then he cleaned up, to the point it looked like no one had ever been there in the first place. He double and triple checked that he'd locked up and turned off the lights before retiring to his room.

Feeling the most chill he'd felt in a long time, he set himself up at his desk. Tidied away his textbooks and got down to writing up the essay. Aizawa hadn't set a deadline, but he'd rather get it over and done with and not have to do it in his summer time so he worked on it until eight thirty, making sure it was done thoroughly so he'd only half to read over it in the morning. Aizawa had better appreciate the detail he was including. He's just about the only person he would trust with this information now. Albeit tentatively.

Before literally jumping into his bed, he made a quick stop to the bathroom, brushing his teeth, washing his face and hands. Finishing up with his stabilizing hand cream, the only tried and tested way of reducing the risk of him setting the place on fire when he slept. Finally settling down he was unable to contain the full body sigh he let out. The soft mattress and light comforter was like being on another plane of existence, another world compared to the closet. He

lay there, watching the shadows of the nearby trees crawl across his wall in the lowering sun, the streets beaming in. It was nice, just being there, just breathing. It wasn't long before he was drifting off to sleep, the most peaceful evening he'd had in forever.

**

Aizawa Shouta, doesn't really know why he decided to go into Teaching. He'd been thinking about it. Now more than ever. And was still coming up blank. Working as an Underground Hero for the most part, was fulfilling enough. Had been for the many years he'd been doing it. But it didn't really allow for a lot of free time during the day. And yet, when his lifelong friend and partner, Yamada Hizashi brought up an opening to teach at UA one day, he thought *Why not? What's the worst that could happen?*

Little did he know, his career as a teacher would always find new ways to surprise him. In some ways that being a Hero couldn't hope to.

One such surprise was something he called *Problem Children*. These were the students that weren't necessarily 'bad eggs', but who always found themselves attracting trouble or just plain being trouble. Those were the students, the Problem Children, who would catch his eye and then just keep catching it.

This year saw Shouta earning a handful of some of the most trouble magnet children he'd ever had the liberty of educating.

The most troubling of which had been Midoriya Izuku, with his penchant for breaking his own bones. And not far behind him was Todoroki Shouto, son of the Number 2 Pro Endeavour, who seemed so out of touch with his peers that it was concerning. The two of them being involved in the 'Stain' incident wasn't the first sign that they'd be trouble. Midoriya had his unstable Quirk and a Hero Complex that would undoubtedly get him killed if it not tamed. Todoroki was mildly less worrying but his over reliance on only half his power would get him in trouble one day.

The last, but definitely not least, was Bakugou Katsuki. A raging inferno of bottled up emotions and misdirected rage. At first Bakugou seemed like nothing more than a hard-headed teen with something to

prove, and he was, that much was obvious. But as the year went on it became more apparent that Bakugou was also something of a spoiled brat. He gave off the impression that he expected everyone bow down and appreciate him for simply breathing. That they should accept he 'was the best' as he often liked to shout with unnecessary volume.

The boy was quickly climbing the ranks for the number one spot of most problematic. Shouta would even say he was already there, having surpassed the other two with recent events stacking up.

After the Sports Festival, Shouta decided to try and understand Bakugou's thinking. What exactly was going on in the kid's head to make him think acting out all the time was the way to go about anything? That task was ongoing, being just about as hard as he thought it would be. Despite his best efforts the enigma that was Bakugou was still that, an enigma.

Gleaning anything beyond incensed deflection from the rising Problem child was a rare miracle. Today's altercation being at the top of the do list, Shouta was left with very little to work with. Bakugou true to his nature had been very tight lipped. Clammed up to a degree unseen before in the student. A tad concerning, he thought. Bakugou was the type that would always be sure to let anyone know how he felt, especially if he felt wronged. He'd lost count of the number of times he'd had to scold the boy for simply mistaking a compliment for mocking. It only served to lead Aizawa to the unnerving conclusion that this time, though wronged, Bakugou didn't see fault with the accusing party.

Todoroki had been much more forthcoming. It was his short chat with him that had given him any direction at all. The stoic boy had explained he was simply standing to his own defence when Bakugou had lashed out at him in the classroom. And that was *apparently* because Todoroki had interrupted Bakugou when he was bullying Midoriya.

And the rest of the class, those that were still around to hear, claimed it was the truth. Momo explained what she'd witnessed at the Infirmary, Sero and Kaminari giving even more vivid details of how Bakugou had tried to blow them up. It wasn't painting very pleasant picture.

Shouta sighed, rubbing his hands roughly down his stubbled chin. He'd have another word with Bakugou, especially if the security footage he was currently scrubbing through confirmed the

accusations. Maybe the night to think on it and cool off would help him loosen up too.

He didn't bother looking up when he heard the door to the teachers' lounge open. At this time of day, when all classes were out, his Colleagues tended to come here.

"Oh good just the man I wanted to see."

Hearing the sweet old voice that belonged to Recovery Girl he paused the footage and turned around to greet her. Regardless of the reason she was here to see him he'd keep his manners first.

"Shuzenji, what do you need? Better be important."

She paused her advanced, her wrinkled eyes looking over to him with a menacing glint.

"Of course it's important. My mistake."

She humphed and got herself comfortable on the long sofa across from him. Other than the hum of pc hard drives the place was quiet, odd for half three in the afternoon. Perhaps she'd scared everyone off. He wouldn't put it past her.

Once she was settled she turned to him with a serious expression. Aizawa really wished he'd had the foresight to wrap himself in his sleeping bag sooner. It was nearing that time where he'd usually sleep until his night shift started up, but he'd gone without before, and this was important. Suppressing a yawn he turned his full attention her way and waited for to speak.

Once the words passed her lips he realized just how important it was.

"Have you thought any more about what we spoke of this morning? About young Bakugou?"

Of course, rising problem child Bakugou Katsuki.

"About how you think he's being bullied?" he replied coolly. He very much doubted her hypothesis.

"There's evidence to support it, Aizawa. He concealing injuries. Claimed Quirk training was the cause, but I've treated him before and never seen anything like it. He was more cooperative than his usual today, and very quiet too."

“And that means he’s being bullied?” Shouto mused, narrowing his eyes and trying to see her reasoning.

“Yesterday you sent him to my infirmary, after he and young Todoroki fought.” He nodded, he had. “He left my office with zero ailments.”

“I’m still not seeing a connection here.”

“Let me finish and perhaps you might.” She spoke curtly, knocking her cane against the floor. Aizawa stayed quiet patiently waiting for her to carry on once again, all the while fighting off the growing urge to yawn. He was tired, that’s all. Not at all uninterested in the topic of conversation.

“Today during his Check up, I ran a blood test. I was only going to look at the levels of Nitroglycerin and Adrenaline in his system to record base levels. I found bone markers there too.”

That had his attention. Bone markers meant damage. Damage meant an altercation, or (by a long shot in Bakugou’s case) an accident. The realization must have shown on his face as she went on.

“As I said, Bakugou claimed it was due to his Quirk. But with the lack of physical training and the unresolved nature of the conflict between himself and young Todoroki, not to mention how physical it got earlier. I think it more likely to be infighting. Bullying.” She fixed him with a knowing stare.

They hadn’t used their Quirks at all in classes that day before or even after Heroics. So, perhaps, there was logic to the theory, but bullying? It seemed bit of a jump for him.

“It could just be that he overworked himself training at home. He said it was his fault didn’t he?”

“We both know that Bakugou is smarter than that. He’s shown from beginning how tenacious he is. I won’t deny the possibility he’s continuing his training outside the classroom. But I don’t think he’d go so far to train his Quirk like that, not without taking precautions. The options I’m left with are few and troubling.”

Aizawa nodded, sitting back in his chair. He gave a glance towards the computer, the frozen feed of the CCTV camera on the hall leading from the Infirmary. Then he thought back to that afternoon, entering his Classroom and seeing Bakugou look near manic, smoke rising from blackened hands, ice still clinging to his cuffs. For all of half a second

he'd looked terrified and the next moment he was following obediently and hurriedly. Kid looked like he needed the out and the fact he'd been so quick to accept something he'd normally scream refusal at was worrying.

"So he's either overworking himself in general or..."

"Being bullied, yes. It's mostly likely I think. Given the information we have." She finished.

Of course, if they were thinking anything alike, she was silently suggesting at complications far more serious but without evidence to back any claim they couldn't do much of anything about it. They'd have to rule out everything else first.

Shouta turned back to his PC and groaned as quiet as he could. Taking everything into account, it was going to be even harder now to figure out what the hell was going on. Nevermind the right thing to do. He took a deep breath, resuming the feed at double speed. He didn't look at her when he said, "I'll be sure to keep a closer eye on him."

**

A new day came and with a brand new shiny pile of shit. Katsuki barely made it past the Homeroom door before being rudely reminded that everyone hated him. Not only did several people scoff and glare. But fucking Invisible bitch had decided it would be hilarious to trip him up. He'd growled in response, tell her to grow up. If she wanted to waste her time hiding *just* to trip him up, then she could continue wasting it. He didn't give a single fuck.

He was both was glad and annoyed, that once again there were no planned classes. It was good as it meant he was free to do as he wished. It was annoying because it meant so was everyone else. While Katsuki reviewed his essay one last time, everybody sat chatting idly. Thankfully, all leaving him be, but just so fucking loud.

He had been free for all of five minutes beyond roll call until Aizawa had called him up to the front of the class. His short walk was accompanied by the usual 'ooh's' and 'aah's' teenagers would make but for him it was much more than a simple catcall. Hearing someone, he's not sure who, mutter that they hopes he's getting expelled he

hoped that his Pro Hero Sensei might say something.

“Sensei?”

Without looking up at him, his Homeroom teacher raised his hand offering a blue slip of paper.

“Recovery Girl asked me to give you this.”

Katsuki was too busy still subconsciously laughing at how ignorant his own teacher was to the very not so subtle goings on around him to make a response or even take what was being offered.

“Bakugou?”

He forced himself to refocus and took it. He looked it over before looking back up. “What’s this for?”

“Recovery Girl brought to my attention the fact that your gauntlets are hurting you? This is a blueprint to an Aerogel cushioning that should reduce the friction when you use them.”

“Tch, I don’t need it.” He responds bluntly.

“Don’t argue. Just take it.”

Katsuki rolled his eyes and quietly accepted.

“I’m sure if you head to the Support Room now they can get the upgrade sorted for when you get back from Camp. They do a marathon development project over summer. Perhaps one of them will take on yours.”

“Sure. Whatever.” He snaps. Not really in the mood for long drawn out conversation with someone who couldn’t be bothered to reprimand anyone who wasn’t him.

“It’s up to you if you use it or not. But we both know how stubborn Recovery Girl can be. You know she’ll just bug you until you use it.”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it.”

“Enough of the attitude Bakugou. You can go now. I shouldn’t have to say so but no fighting, no more Quirk use outside Heroics. No more shouting or reckless behaviour. Understand?”

“Yessir.” He says, mock saluting and gaining the faintest of concerned

furrows from his Sensei.

The fact that Aizawa of all people was beginning to sound like everyone else (who only pretended to give a shit), was... disquieting. Could he sense what was going on in the class? Without really knowing anything had he already decided Katsuki wasn't worth the effort? Worse still did he know and had just chosen not to care?

Back in his seat Katsuki was more than happy to ignore and continue being ignored. He sat there, mulling over the benefits of using this "upgrade" he'd been offered, for no more than a few seconds before being disturbed.

"Hey Kacchan! What are you working on?" came Deku's nosey ass voice.

Katsuki didn't want to give anyone any reason to even sniff in his direction, any reason to want him to get into trouble again so soon. So feigning the fact that he didn't hear, he continued to proof read his essay as Deku continued to pester him trying in vain to ignore him.

God, he wished the Hag had just let him get new earphones after the last ones died on him. *'You should have taken better care of them'* she'd told him. He had, they'd only died because they were ancient by headphones standards, most wired sets having a lifespan of roughly a year. His had been pushing 3, and that was only because he'd taken care of them like they were gold dust; rare and therefore difficult to come by. Those fancy wireless ones he often saw people with were far too expensive and fragile for *'brutes like him'* anyway.

"Uh... Kacchan?" Deku asked again, adding to the attention seeking behaviour with a light poke at his back.

Katsuki wasn't about to give in, but past occurrences told him this wasn't going to give Deku any hints either. So, as calmly as he could he turned and to look at the Nerd. Fixing him with a disinterested look and not saying a word. Curious as he was, looking at anyone else wasn't an option if he wanted to remain remotely calm like he currently was. He was content to let them continue like he didn't exist. To let them make their cheap remarks when it suited him. He was better, he was going to be Number 1.

Deku was the only one who seemed dumb enough to not adhere to that unspoken status quo.

"Hey Kacchan!" Deku started, with a sickening smile that made

Katsuki feel like the idiot knew something he didn't and not just that, but that he was also trying to make it obvious that Katsuki didn't already know. "What are you working on?"

Katsuki just stares. He didn't plan to answer him either. Simply stares, brows furrowed, lips a hard line of uncaring. He counts the seconds (far too many) until Deku gets uncomfortable with his attempt at making conversation. Deku laughs, more chuckles, very awkwardly.

"Um. Okay... I'll let you carry on. S-sorry for interrupting you, Kacchan."

Katsuki hears a breath of what he assumes can only be relief as he turns back to his work, while slowly letting out the breath he'd been holding himself. He was so ready to spend this weekend alone. To not have any obligations to 'hang out' with anyone or do anything he wasn't already going to do without someone screaming at him to do it first.

After finishing and packing away his essay, (no way was he going to hand it over in front of everyone and give them more reasons to mock him) Katsuki spent a grand total of ten minutes just staring at the blueprints with an image of his Grenade gauntlets in his mind. Then he stood up having made his choice.

With free reign of what they did today Katsuki was going to make the most of his time. Sitting around thinking wasn't helping anyone and especially not himself, or the people he would one day save once he graduated top of the class and showed every asshole in this place just how far they'd get on making assumptions.

With the blue slip in hand he made his way to the Support Department's Development studio.

**

The Development studio was absolute chaos. Unlike most departments, or schools in general, everything was all go. Well, for this one student it was. Katsuki recognised her the second he saw her. The crazy Pink haired girl, with eyes that had definitely seen some stuff, from the Sports festival. As far as names went he couldn't remember. But she'd been the only Support student to make it to the

top sixteen, to add too that she'd also been the one to bless the nation with fifteen minutes of straight up free advertising for her 'babies' while using Glasses as the demo dummy.

He smirked at the memory, probably the only positive one from that day now. She'd been willing to use what was on hand to meet her goals and made a fool of an asshole in the process. That made her decent enough in his books.

"Oi! Gadget Girl!" he shouted as he crossed the room to her work station. Said work station was buried in small mountains of tech, so much he hadn't noticed the other purple haired occupant behind it all. Another face he recognised from the Festival. The guy was slumped relaxedly over a small space he'd dug out in the mess, watching Gadget as she spoke a million miles an hour about some lithe looking mouth piece she was holding. Katsuki was perturbed to find himself ignored.

"Oi!"

She paused and glanced at him before promptly continuing with her long-winded talk, completely unaffected and just as passionate. Incensed he was about to snap when Purple hair spoke up.

"Let her finish."

Just great, another asshole who thinks they can tell him what to do!

"Fuck off eyebags, I wasn't talking to you!" he snapped.

"Wait, You're Bakugou Katsuki?!" suddenly Katsuki's vision was filled with pink and goggles, Gadget was right up in his face, hands gripping him tightly. She was extremely enthusiastic, more than he remembered. Just as quick, she'd backed off and broke into a brand new spiel about the item in question. "Check. This. Out! Shinso-kun's Quirk is triggered by responding to him, but that trick won't always work when he becomes Pro, so this Baby will let him mimic any voice and--"

"I really don't care." He remarked but when entirely unnoticed.

"-then the Villain's will get their ass kicked! Or even kick each other's asses!" she finished, looking absolutely ecstatic about the whole thing. Katsuki couldn't understand that sentiment anymore, sooner or later she was going to be disappointed.

“That’s assuming I actually get moved to the Hero course Hatsume.” Eyebags groaned.

With just about the same amount of energy she grabbed Eyebag’s by the cheeks and squeezed, “You *will* and I know it! Then I can develop all your tech! We’ll make so many Babies!”

For anyone not involved in this conversation the subtext would be frightening. Katsuki was a part of it and he was mildly concerned. Not to mention a little lost.

“Right, once you two are done being freaks, you can start on this.” He announced, flashing the blue slip in front of her. Her eyes lit up like iridescent topaz. It was snatched from his grip, and he was loathed to admit he hadn’t seen it coming.

“Ooh! A new potential baby? Aerogel? Recovery Girl’s design. Hmm.” She split off into a loud mumble as she skipped about the room lifting small tools and began to assemble something on the go as she went.

Katsuki watched her disappear across the room and only just restrained his jaw from dropping. This girl was insane.

“You get used to it.” Eyebags said from his spot at the desk. The mouthpiece Gadget had been talking about now in his own hold as he examined it back and front. Katsuki didn’t want to get used to it, wouldn’t get a chance to either most likely.

“The fuck would you even need that for?” he asks, unsure of where the curiosity is coming from. It’s certainly not the fact that this is one of the most nonviolent conversations that didn’t revolve around how fucked he was that he’d had all week.

“Weren’t you listening? So Villain’s that know my Quirk will get confused and answer me, so that I can use my Quirk on them.”

“And your Quirk is?!”

“Seriously? I can Brainwash people. God, you’re just as stuck up as everyone says you are.”

And just like that the serenity crumbled. If Eyebag’s heard that, he could hear anything.

“Fuck what everyone says.” Katsuki grumbled, turning and folding his arms. *Truly, just fuck them!*

His downward spiral was thankfully interrupted by a returning Gadget Girl once again.

“Okay, so this Baby is an expandable metal fibre composite that can increase usable volume *and* increase mobility! So you can do all your trick moves *and* do so with perfect functionality!”

“Wait, wait, the fuck happened to the Aerogel?!” He asked, thoroughly lost.

Gadget took in stride, carrying on like he hadn’t interrupted. “Oh, that baby’s all good but this baby will make things even better!”

“NO! You’re not touching any other part of my Gauntlets! Or my suit!”

Eyebag’s failed to stifle a scoff.

“Fuck you!”

“Bakugou-kun! My Babies need to be used and this one is begging to be a part of your Grenade Gauntlets!”

“I said fucking no Gadget! Just add the Gel and *nothing* else! Don’t even add an extra screw! I’ll fucking kill you and all your Babies! Got it?”

She nodded, with a very unconvincing smile. Eyebag’s was in a full blown barely contained laughing fit. He’d had enough, and his social interaction metre was all full up.

“You fucking better!” He shouted before making a not at all quick exit.

**

No sooner was had he sat back at his desk, with the essay sitting and ready to hand in, was he leaving again. Aizawa called on him, told him to meet him in the faculty office. He couldn’t help the twisting sickness filling him at the mere concept. Couldn’t help thinking the worst was about to happen all over again, because really when shit like this happened to him it could only ever be the worst.

Had he already heard about him getting too testy in the Dev. Studio? Fuck, Aizawa had told him not to act out. And that had been the first

thing he'd done.

It hadn't sat any better with him when Aizawa called Deku of all people to the front just as he'd left the room. If it was in any way connected to why he was sent away it really could only spell doom.

He tried his hardest not to clench up the finished essay in his fists as he walked. Didn't want Aizawa to see how worked up over this he was getting, or to think that he had lowered his standards for school work. He had to maintain the perfection to the very end.

He supposed it was good that he was feeling about as refreshed as he could be. Sleeping in a real bed last night, in an environment without the fear of being smacked or criticised for simply existing and being an inconvenience, had done him a world of good. Didn't change the fact that his existence clearly was an inconvenience to everyone these days but at least when he was alone there was less likelihood of him actually fucking up and causing problems for anyone. Except himself. Alone he could work on himself and ensure he was progressing in the right direction. Whatever direction that was.

With Aizawa not yet there, and most of the other teachers not currently hosting or supervising any class in the office. Bakugou opted to stay outside the door, leaning and giving off as relaxed an aura he could. He won't deny he jumped a little when the door opened and Present Mic stepped out, a bunch of papers in hand. The Hero himself looked just as shocked.

"Yo! Listener you looking for someone?" the Pro asked, very loudly, mixing English and Japanese seamlessly. The man was an English teacher after all.

"Aizawa-sensei asked me to wait here for him." He answered, returning his gaze to the opposite wall, before spying movement from down the corridor. Aizawa, was heading their way, and Todoroki was right behind him. Mic sang his salutations to his colleague and carried on his way.

Katsuki swallowed, knowing already he was doomed, but not inching even a little to let them know that. He'd fight as best he could and hopefully he'd win this time.

"Bakugou?" his teacher mused, before looking inside and seeing the place full. "Change of plans, let's head to my office."

His office?

Katsuki wasn't aware individual teachers had offices, but then Aizawa was also a Quirk counsellor so he guessed it was for that reason Aizawa had his own.

In the office, Bakugou stood as far from Todoroki as he could, both of them standing in front of the (also scarily organised) desk. He trained his face to be as annoyed as he could and did his absolute best to not look in the Icy Hot bastards direction.

"I'm under the impression that you two don't really like each other. And that you're both being unnecessarily aggressive towards one another. Help me understand why?"

Katsuki remained silent. It wasn't that he didn't have plenty to say about the asshole, it was more a silence born out of wanting to hear what Todoroki had to say first. Of seeing what he was up against. Which Todoroki did with little prompting.

"As I explained yesterday Sensei, I was just stepping in to stop any harm coming to Midoriya."

His own silence stopped there.

"I fucking told you nothing was happening!" as desperate as it might sound, it *was* the truth. He wasn't going to do anything to the Nerd. Not unless trying to explain things was a fucking crime!

"Calm down, Bakugou." Aizawa warned with a calmly stern tone.

"No! He—" he bit his tongue, trying to contain his anger at being falsely accused. It was something that should have been easy enough with all the experience he had being accused of something he hadn't done in the first place. He took a breath and tried again. "I didn't do anything to fucking Deku."

The cursing was purely for his own satisfaction.

"That's not how Midoriya explained it."

Katsuki felt his heart drop, as if it could get any lower, his eyes darting back to his teacher who was eyeing him closely.

Fucking Deku? He was... he was part of it all too? The one person he'd thought would vouch for him, even if he hated the idea. Again, he felt stupid for thinking the Nerd would be on his side with all the shit he'd pulled over the years. But he doubted the Nerd would lie to that

extent...

“Nor is it what the CCTV in the halls show. That’s not to say Todoroki was in the right for assaulting you. You will both be punished accordingly which I’ll discuss with each of you separately. Todoroki, you go now. I’d like to speak to Bakugou alone.”

“Thank you, Sensei.” Todoroki said with a short bow and left.

Katsuki stood, barely containing the shake in his hands. His sensei sat back in his chair and regarded him for a long time, until he finally broke the silence.

“Bakugou. This is getting a little out of hand. I’ve said too many times that the aggressive behaviour needs to stop, and I keep getting reports of the same thing. If there’s something happening, something going on, if there’s something, anything I can do to help you, I need you to talk to me.”

Katsuki listened to every word and promptly ignored it all. “I don’t need your help.” He snapped. “Nothing is going on.”

He glared at his teacher, driving home the desire to not be bothered. A tired sigh leaving the Pro, told him he’d succeeded. “Alright, I can’t force you, but just know if you ever want... a listening ear, you can talk to me. As for punishment, you’ll be attending the extra classes at Camp with the others. Make this the last time I do something like this, Bakugou, for your own sake. Only for the fact that it’s the last day of term I’d suspend you. If I don’t see any improvement I *will* take more permanent steps. Understand?”

Katsuki only nodded, before offering the more than crumpled (and almost forgotten) essay still in his grasp. When the Hero/Teacher, looked at him quizzically, he spoke up, “The essay you set me yesterday. About my Quirk.”

Aizawa took the few crumpled pages he’d written, smoothing them out gently.

“This isn’t something you should rush . You’re sure you want to hand it in already?”

I spent all last night and most of this morning after my run doing this shit, he thinks. He was plenty aware of the benefits and fallbacks of being able to produce Explosions. Writing it was easier than breathing.

“I wouldn’t be giving it to you if I wasn’t.”

It was Aizawa’s turn to nod. “Okay... Listen, you’re a good kid Bakugou. But you need be more mature about things. Think about your peers and how they’d deal with the situation, how you’d feel in their position. How you’d like them to act in your place. Okay?”

Think about what they would do? What they would want to do?!

Screw that! Katsuki knew exactly what those fuckers were thinking and none of it was nice or remotely Heroic. God knows what they were just waiting to do. Todoroki was clearly more than willing to lie to get him in shit. And not just to Aizawa but to the others in the class too. The way they looked at him now, he’d nearly think they believed he ate new-born’s for breakfast.

And fucking Deku... fucking, asshole, Nerd, shitty loser Deku! All that talk about being equals and he was just like them too?! That... that he really didn’t want to believe. He couldn’t. And yet time and time again the world kept proving him wrong.

A Summer Like No other Part 1

Chapter Summary

Katsuki prepares for Camp. Attempts at a heart-to-heart and gets some good advice for a change.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! I hope this update finds you all well!

I know it's been a long while, but this chapter was kicking my butt! Plus i didn't want to neglect my disertation too much :) I really hope this one makes sense! The whole camp scenario became a super massive chapter, so I've decided to split it into parts too.

Please enjoy!

One more thing before you start, this fic has reached over 12000 views! And over 700 kudos!!! That's actually insane to think about!!! The fact that so many people are enjoying this is just awesome! Thank you to everyone who's given it a shot, and given feedback and words of encouragement! I read every comment (still have a few to get back on) and I love reading all your thoughts and frustrations!

Finally, Chapter Warnings for: Self-depracting thoughts, swearing, child abuse (physical and verbal), bullying. If you think something else should be included don't hesitate to tell me!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Summer Break. The few weeks of the year were every teen (aspiring Hero or otherwise) spends their free time doing all the things they never had time to do during the school term. In Katsuki's case, it typically meant going to *special* classes his mother decided on. From useful Quirk lessons to less useful Drum lessons. Over the years the Hag had him do it all. Anything to get him out of the way for the few weeks that were summer break.

This summer began as no exception. Only this time with his parents gone for a few days. Katsuki decided to use this rare opportunity to do

as he saw fit.

It's not like he had anywhere to go or anyone to go there with. While the Extras of 1-A were out in the summer sun, getting burned, lazing about and wasting their time at the new Arcade in town or doing their usual stupid shit, Katsuki stayed at home. He wasn't being lazy or burning through his time, the Hag had raised him better than that. No, he spent those few peaceful days further honing his skills.

His goal wasn't just to ensure he was ready for camp in general but also ready to face his new reality as the outcast of 1-A. The Squad used to joke about it, used to laugh and warn him his attitude would get him nowhere. Now they could say they were right, that is if they ever bothered to say anything to him ever again.

Katsuki worked himself twice as hard and ran twice as long in his bid to make his dream a reality all the faster. He made sure to balance his time as well as he could, and honestly without the Hag shouting or the Old Man in the background to quietly judge his every move, it was all so much easier than he'd ever had it. He ate well, studied the texts Aizawa had listed for them in more detail and reviewed the previous term's syllabus too; he clearly didn't know it well enough if was still only ranking third and he needed good foundation if he ever hoped to reach the top. Not just in class but once he went Pro too.

It was clearer to him now. The reality he was facing was one where no one cared, and if no one else was going to have his back then he could only rely on himself. Nothing new really, he'd been doing that for years. Now he just needed to refine that ability.

However accepting he'd convince himself he was the fact that Deku, the fucking nerd, was now apparently against him too was hard to swallow. As much as he tried not to let it bother him, he found his mind wandering back to the image of green hair and green eyes. More often than not even overpowering the other colours that plagued his mind. And it infuriated him to no end.

All the times that Green-haired idiot had been there to watch him fall, those same times where he'd be the first to his side hand outstretched ready to help him up. And that, that wasn't how it was supposed to be. It was never meant to be like that. Katsuki was the strong one. The one with a powerful Quirk. He didn't need help, not from a Quirkless broccoli haired Nerd who cried enough for a family of four on a daily basis! Deku was weak! So what if he had a fancy overpowered Quirk now! He'd let all that shit happen to him! He'd just stood by and let it

happen, all the while talking about being a Hero and doing absolutely nothing about it!

As much as it angered him, Katsuki couldn't hold on to it. He'd been the source of those years of torment. He should have been the one helping the Nerd... just like the Hag had told him to. Deku was weaker, yet somehow so much better than him. So much better apparently that his one track mind could shake the idea of all that he'd grown used to with Deku suddenly disappearing from his life.

Why?

For some godforsaken reason the Hag, the Old Man too, they saw more worth in Quirkless Crybaby Deku than him. Katsuki hated him, so fucking much that sometimes he felt like he'd blow himself up from the sheer build-up of rage. So fucking why?! Why was his mind so worked up over this betrayal! He should be glad Deku is finally showing his true colours. Glad that the stupid Nerd is finally fucking off out of his life, finally acting... but he isn't glad. If Katsuki had to pick anything to describe how he was feeling it was perplexed.

For years upon years, Katsuki had done everything in his power to get Deku to back off, to stay away. A fucking lifetime spent pushing the Nerd away and never succeeding and Katsuki felt empty at the prospect of having finally achieved it!

Why now? Maybe Icy Hot had helped Deku open his eyes. Helped him see how unhealthy it was to hang around and chase after him. Any other day he'd be grateful for someone doing the needful. But under the circumstances, he'd rather it had not happened at all. Deku hadn't been deliberately making his life hell, he could see that now. He was just being his annoyingly nosey and dorky self.

Deku might have thrown him in the deep end with Aizawa, but whatever the reason, Katsuki couldn't find it in him to be mad. Not went it could have been so much worse. If Deku had come right out and told Aizawa everything, just like he'd told Todoroki... Katsuki couldn't even begin to imagine what might await him if that ever happened. Entertaining the thought alone was gut wrenching, and far too daunting. As much as he liked to think that he'd have been prepared to accept the aftermath of his own making, Katsuki knew he wasn't even close to fucking ready. Just look at what happened with the Squad!

All he had to do was look at the ongoing shitstorm that was his life

since the Squad discovered the truth. He'd fooled himself into thinking he was ready for that, but no. He was "dealing" but it was far from the ideal scenario he'd imagined. So he wasn't so sure anymore. If just the idea of his Sensei thinking any less of him was painful, Katsuki was sure he'd bury himself alive before letting him find out just how pathetic a person he really was.

The more prideful side of him refuted the cowardly thought. If his true, disgusting nature ever reached his Sensei's ears Katsuki would force himself to face it head on. Whatever punishment he was served, it would be the least he deserved, barely even a fraction of the penance he should be paying to make up for it. The thought of more *permanent measures* as his Sensei had warned didn't seem all that impossible.

Regardless of what he told himself, it was more than enough to have him tossing and turning, losing sleep in lieu of figuring out a game plan. A way to keeping moving forward even with the walls being put in his way. Because he wasn't the best yet, and he needed to be. If he wanted to stand a chance at UA now, he needed to find something, anything, that would keep his mind off the bad and focused on the end goal. It wasn't exactly a matter of life and death, but Katsuki was going to treat it like it was. Because if he failed again, if he gave Aizawa another reason to call home, the Hag would probably lock him up for good. That way he could stop being an embarrassment.

Right now, getting started and staying focused was the only thing on his mind. Especially when those few days of absolute bliss weren't going to last. Sure enough the weekend was over in a flash, much faster than he'd like, and what followed was a long week of misery.

*

His Sensei had sent him home early on the last day after their 'chat' with a simple reminder of where and when to meet the following week. And (of course) a warning. A simple caution to have adjusted his attitude by then too. Aizawa had however neglected to tell him he'd be calling his parents about his outburst. Though at this point Katsuki supposes he should have expected it. It was standard procedure; he fucks up, his parents get called and sooner or later he ends up on the receiving end of another 'Lesson'.

He knows he only has himself to blame for not keeping himself in line. And for failing to elaborate when Aizawa asked him to explain his actions, but it's not like he would have been believed even if he had. Todoroki had everything all sweet and cushy, the asshole could have said Aliens attacked and the whole class would have backed him up at this point. Katsuki didn't see the point in wasting his breath.

Aizawa had been lenient enough, had attempted a second time to get the answers before exacting punishment. The Hag was barely a minute in the door before she'd hunted him down. When she caught sight of him, casually cleaning up his dishes, her sour face turned to pure rage. All hell broke loose, and the little peace he'd gotten from their absence was drowned along with any hope he had of having a remotely peaceful week before camp. Even now he's pretty sure he can still hear her screaming at him. Yelling about how much of an ungrateful brat he was, a lowlife who was never going to achieve anything in life.

Bullying! Again! Not just little Izuku but the son of the number two Hero as well! The fuck is wrong with you?! Why do you have to make things so hard for us? Why can't you just be normal and do what I tell you ? Why can't you just be more like Izuku?

Her words alone had him kicked to the floor, the slaps that followed were just embellishments.

Inko doesn't have to deal with any shitty behaviour from Izuku because he's not like this! He's not selfish, not a stupid whiney fucking monster like you are! If you're looking to leave UA all have to do is ask, no need to be an attention seeking brat! No need to act like such a fucking Villain!

Her words echoed in his mind, joining the cacophony of insults he's heard more and more frequently since the Sports Festival. No, even before that. Ever since the Sludge incident, what felt like forever ago now, people had been dragging his name through the dirt. Now they were just more open about it.

The faceless nobodies in the press, the strangers on the train, he could deal with their words. He didn't know them. They didn't know him. Their opinions meant nothing. But the Hag, his own mother. Hell, his fucking classmates were nothing compared to the searing pain he felt at simply hearing her mock and berate him for the useless excuse of a human he was. Because *she* knew him, better than anyone. She raised him, fed and clothed him, gave in to all his petty whims as a child, guided him on how to survive in a world where the weak are nothing

but dirt. Even with that guidance he was still failing.

The Hag knew him through and through. So she had to know the truth. Her words *were* the truth. All she was doing was trying help him be strong and stay strong.

All Katsuki seemed to be good at these days was fucking things up for himself and everyone else apparently.

As always, when he refuted the accusations, his words fell on deaf ears.

Thinking back, running out the door and disappearing for several hours just to get away from the onslaught of harsh words probably wasn't the smartest idea, not when he should have just dealt with it there and then. Instead he'd ran away like a wuss and for his trouble bumped into Deku and looked like even more of a wuss running from him! Just letting her air her annoyance at him seemed like a walk in the park compared to what he got when returned home sticky and drenched in the leftovers of some strangers smoothie.

The price he paid, for *lying* to her and *embarrassing* her, for being so weak as to flee from her inevitable justice, was an even longer stint in the closet. Just to make sure the message was received, the Hag had the Old Man give him a lashing with his belt before stuffing him in the suffocatingly small space. Still dirty and sweaty. Her way of letting him know just how badly he'd fucked up this time, of how much they disapproved of his behaviour, his very existence. Of just how weak he still was.

No food, no water. No light. Drenched in his own sweat. Nothing but his own thoughts echoing the painful truth she'd drilled into his head over and over, and the struggle to glean a full breath for nearly four whole days.

The distant muffled sounds of life carrying on so much better, calmer without him not even a blip on his radar as he fought to stay sane while his nightmares plagued him. He thought he was going to die. For real this time. The Sludge Villain would have a run for his money if he'd come face to face with the Hag. That Villain had fought tooth and nail to make him submit and failed. The Hag just had to look at him and he was willing to do anything to earn her favour.

When they did let him out, the Hag watched with a disgusted grimace as he crawled, body numbed beyond recognition and didn't so much as offer a helping hand.

Katsuki could only think of how much worse it would get if he continued down this path. He waited for her to impart her scared guidance. To remind him once more just how wrong he is and correct his errors. That's what it was all for.

The Hag scoffed and left. Left him there alone to gather the fractured pieces of himself.

No direction at all of how to avoid it in future. The fact that he'd been telling the truth, that he been innocent of the claimed crimes didn't matter. They wouldn't hear it because his actions told them all they needed. He wasn't perfect. He *needed* to be perfect to the best. The Hag *needed* him to be perfect too. The Old Man was just a pawn carrying out the sentence of whipping that perfection into him when the words weren't enough.

Was the Hag giving up on him too?

Katsuki wasn't even sure what he'd done to warrant the extent of the punishment. Was he supposed to just know how to fix himself at this point? He'd endured his captivity in silence. Had been extremely careful not to raise his voice. Had even opted to smother his hands in Stabilizer once he was able to move to keep from sparking off at all in front of them. A simple precaution that was hell for his chemical balance but he'd rather risk a few late-night burns than risk a harder slap to the face. What else was he supposed to do?

He didn't know and despite his efforts he still ended up with a smattering of fresh new bruises just in time for camp. But the worst was over. Probably. He could let himself breathe for a few seconds on the journey to UA. He could lose himself the burn of training during the camp. Fuck knows how that was going to go with 1-A out for blood but for now he was fine, as relaxed as he could be with the knowledge that he was exchanging one set of demons for another.

And today was the day.

It was far too early for him to be up. Counter to what the ex-squad might have joked about he didn't always wake at the ass crack of dawn. With school starting at 8.30am, he didn't get up any earlier than 6.30 most days. That left him more than enough time to get in a good run, a quick shower (breakfast on good days) before making the short walk to catch the train and arrive at UA for 8am. He took an extra thirty minutes when he stayed up late, an extra hour and a half on the weekends was more than enough. He like to try to keep to that

same routine. He liked the normalcy of routine events now more than ever.

It was currently 5.30 in the morning. He had ample time until they were all due to meet, that is several hours. They had to meet at the front gate to UA for 8am and anyone who wasn't there was getting left behind. At least, that's what Aizawa-sensei had said via a group message the night before. The man did love his *logical ruses*, Katsuki wouldn't doubt that this was just another way of motivating the slackers to show up on time. In fact he was surprised his Sensei hadn't set an earlier time just to better prepare them for the intensity of the training to come. If it was going to be anything like the Pro had warned why bother sugar-coating it?

Katsuki chose to not think too hard on the details that didn't matter as he dressed himself, easing his aching limbs into his thankfully oversized uniform. Being responsible for "buying" his own uniform was one of the few things he was grateful for.

He double checked his bag, made sure he'd packed away everything he needed. From the basic necessities, like a changes of clothes, notebooks and pencils to the slightly more important things like his Stabilizer cream. He didn't have much of it left, enough to last the duration of camp, since he'd only need it at night, but he'd need to get more once he got back. He considered leaving a note for the Hag to get him some more. She was always adamant that he keep the worst aspects himself under control, his Quirk being the main factor quickly followed by his tendency to speak his mind so blatantly. The idea of relying on her though, wasn't ideal, she'd probably tell him to do it himself anyway.

As he grabbed his bag, slinging it over his shoulders and ignoring the ache of fresh bruises beneath his shirt he decided against it. He was more than capable of picking up some more from the Pharmacy on his way home. Every little helped when he was trying to get in her good graces.

With trained stealth, he descended the stairs, making sure to avoid the step that he knew creaked. He was in some ways thankful he'd been too sore to sleep well, this way he could avoid seeing them, avoid any more altercations. The last week was more than enough. Besides, he could sleep for a few minutes on the train to UA, and again on the bus. Nobody would be chatting to him anyway, so it wasn't a big loss.

Reaching the genkan he paused, considering how empty his stomach

was. As if starving him for four days wasn't enough, he'd been denied dinner last night too. It would normally be easy enough for him to grab something at that station or at the nearest café, but that was going to be difficult without any money. Another punishment... taking away what little he had and making him work to earn it back.

Katsuki subdued a groan at the thought of heading to the kitchen, every second he lingered was a potential second closer to either of them getting up. They worked to their own schedules and it would rarely be consistent. The last thing he wanted was another lecture. He *knew* already, he was a shitty person and he needed to try harder, constantly hearing it was driving him insane.

He snatched his shoes, more than willing to walk halfway down the street before putting them on just get moving. He hadn't even put the key in the door when her voice stopped him in his tracks.

"Not even going to say goodbye?" The Hag asked him, her voice calm, indifferent and completely deprived of any emotion. The usual. At least she wasn't shouting. He turned the key the rest of the way hearing the lock click and then turned to face her. She was standing at the door to the inhouse office. Her nighty long and flowing, her face picture perfect. He could guess she'd been a model in her youth. Her expression was surprisingly soft giving away nothing of the harshness underneath.

"Come here, baby." She ordered with open arms.

His heart felt like it was in his throat, like it was about to leap out and take all his other vital organs with it. Honestly, that was probably a better outcome than whatever she wanted with him. But still he walked to her. He sat his bag down with unnecessary care, allowing himself every millisecond to delay getting closer. The walk to meeting her was far too short.

"Let me take a look at you." She commanded, pulling him closer when he opted to stand as far from her as he dared.

He felt ill when her manicured hand reached up to furl through his hair before, with a light pressure, she was pulling his head down to rest on her shoulder. He suppressed a shiver. It wasn't a hug, didn't feel like a hug. There was no comfort to be gained as her fingers carded, far too softly, through his shock of ash-blond hair. Blond hair that was far too similar to hers, as he leaned against her stone still and unwilling to move until she was done with whatever this was.

“How are you feeling?” Her voice was laced with false interest. She doesn’t slow her ministrations either. Instead her fingers trace over his shoulders and back to places she knows will hurt if he gives her a reason (not that she needed one).

“I’m fine.” He mumbled.

He was all too eager to get going, her hold was the only thing stopping him. After the last few days Katsuki didn’t want to give her another reason to raise her hand, or voice. He hated how powerless he felt at home, how fucking useless he felt. Abhorred how simply hearing her voice was enough to set his nerves on edge. Hated it even more that UA was slowly becoming the same.

“Not too sore? I know the last few days were pretty tough, but trust me, it was for the best. You’ll see. One day you’ll thank me.”

The frown already set in his face hardens. If he were to tell the truth, he was in agony. His parents had always reserved the ‘belt’ for when he did something unforgivable. Last time had been just after Inko called to talk about Deku. The very first time, had been the only time anyone had looked at him with concern. He’d been 5 or 6 maybe, at the time. He was still getting the hang of his Explosions, he hadn’t meant to hurt anyone, hadn’t meant to break anything either. He just... panicked when it happened. There had always been a clear line between what merited a lashing and it was always that it was something irreparable. He couldn’t understand what was so bad this time? Even if it was all lies, it was nothing that couldn’t be fixed with a little hard work.

You’re the thing that needs fixing! The thing that can’t be fixed! Can’t you fucking see that! You’re so far fucking gone a beating is the only thing that might fucking work!

He shook his head to rid himself of that nagging voice, a voice that sounded too much like the mother-figure holding him.

“I said I’m fine.” He repeated, too tired to conjure any heat in his words.

“Good, good.” She all but coos at him, one hand stroking his head, the other pressing not so lightly onto his bruised shoulders. “You know I love you, don’t you baby?”

Baby... he hated that stupid fucking pet name. How she always said it so softly, like a soothing song. Like how a mother who truly loved him

would say it... probably. It only ever succeeded in filling him with dread. It was lie and an insult. He wasn't a baby. *Baby* was only ever intended to rile him up and let her get her way.

It hadn't always been that way, he could vaguely remember a time when she would call him by name, and he'd eagerly rush to be held in her arms while she pressed warm wet kisses into his cheeks. So long ago... the image of that woman was just a blur in his mind. Nothing like the Hag before him who always needed more from him. More attention, more obedience, just more. Sometimes he felt like one of the models that she'd dress up for her shoots. Like a doll she was moulding into something pleasant to look at. So long as he was her son and a Hero he'd have an image to uphold, one he thoroughly sucked at maintaining. With every day that passed he was pretty sure he was making things worse for her too.

Every breath he took was harmful and no amount of masking it could hide it. There were new articles every day, though compared to how it had been following the Sports Festival it was nothing. Someone somewhere had something to say about him, about how despicable he was, or about how UA should do something before it was too late. It was looking more likely every day too and he had no one to blame but himself.

The Hag's fingers paused their path across his head, her grip tightening a little as he remained quiet, lost in his thoughts. He wasn't a baby, he was a Hero trainee, future Number 1 and he'd impress her by becoming the best there is just like she wanted. Yet, all she had to do was look at him and he felt as if he was incompetent. Being the best was getting harder and no amount of effort was saving him. He wished someone would just tell him what he had to do. He was tired of guessing and getting it wrong.

"Baby?" Her hands moved to anchor his head so she could look down at him. He stared blankly past her afraid of what he'd see in her eyes. "Answer me sweetie."

He defiantly kept his mouth shut. All the times she'd cussed at or hit him for snapping back or simply telling the truth far too many to let him answer. If he couldn't say it how it was he'd rather stay silent.

She scoffed, clearly not impressed, "Oh, I see how it is? The silent treatment. Hmm? Alright then."

One hand went back to stroking his head, fingers pulling at suborn

knots no brush or comb could tame. Katsuki just wanted to leave, wanted to be half way gone already. Get to UA and wait out the few hours alone, until everyone else showed up and the bus took them all far away from here. His classmates might be of similar mindsets to his parents now that his dirty laundry was getting aired, but at least they wouldn't confuse him with false niceties.

“Well, since you clearly don't know, I do love you. Me and you father, we both love you so, so much. Even when you make things difficult, baby. And you are so good at making things difficult for us. Everything we do is for your own good. You understand that don't you?” she pauses, cupping his cheeks between her palms and squishing them a little too hard. He hates how he melts into the warmth of her palms, the small comfort the most safe he'd felt in a at home in a long time.

The Hag sighed, harsh judging red eyes looking down on him, “When your teachers call us telling us these horrible things about you, I can't help but feel like you don't really love us back. Like you're not even trying to be the Hero you claim to be. And you've been making work so hard for us lately. Did you see the article the other day, *The Beast of UA*, that's what they're calling you now. You should know how badly that reflects on us! We get so stressed out dealing with your messes! This bad behaviour, the lying, the shouting and the bullying... it has to stop, baby.”

He understood, he really did. He'd be pissed too. But *bullying*... that's where he drew the line. The urge to refute the lies he knew were as such, stronger than the need to stay quiet so suddenly he couldn't hold back. He'd rather stick hot pins in his eyeballs than let *her* believe any of it for another second.

“I didn't bully anyone! I'm not like that! Not anymore!”

Her hands paused when he spoke out, finishing a final caress down his cheeks to rest on his shoulders. He knew he'd fucked up once again. Raised his voice. It was hard to contain himself when it came to defending his progress in that regard. Her lips pursed as she stared down at him.

“You sure about that? Because to me it seems you haven't changed at all. Even now, it's like you're trying to tell me your Sensei is a liar!”

“No! I- He-” her grip pressing down on fresh the bruises littering his shoulders, the ones she'd put there just a few days ago, halted him. He

squeezed his eyes shut, bit his lip and prayed that she'd just let him go already.

All he wanted, was for her to listen, to give him the benefit of the doubt. It wasn't hard adjusting himself to her desires, it was just impossible to meet the expectation. It was painful sometimes, just how much he wanted to impress her, to get across the fact that he was facing so much and still getting through each day. Anyone else would have succumbed to the voices and nightmares that plagued him every waking and sleeping moment. Katsuki was getting by, focusing on the goal, ignoring the ever growing pebbles in his shoes.

He was barely getting by on the skin of his teeth but she didn't seem to notice that. Or even care.

"Baby, you know I hate it when you lie to me."

He swallowed and took a deep breath, raising his head so he could meet her eyes. Her familiar shade of red meeting his. He really hated how alike they were, but if there was one thing he'd always deny fervently it was that he wasn't a liar. That lesson she'd thoroughly ingrained in him.

"I'm not lying."

She rolled her eyes. "Of course not. Because you never do anything wrong, right baby? Perfect little you, takes everything and gives nothing back! Tell me, Mr. Perfect, who is lying then? Hmm. Because I highly doubt your teacher would lie to any parent. Let alone just to ruin your sorry ass."

Katsuki struggled to answer, unsure of the best path to take. In truth, the idea had been playing through his head for the last four days; more and more as the isolation became unbearable. Those days he'd spent locked in his closet sized cell, wishing he was just that little bit stronger and could actually prove his own innocence. He considered just tell her everything. He's certain now, his life would be going a least a little easier he just had just admitted to what had happened in class. If he'd told Aizawa, then he'd have called the Hag for an entirely different reason. Only downside would be confessing how he'd got into the situation in the first place.

He let himself ponder, if he told her, would she stop hurting him? Would she phone the school and complain about it? Then everyone would leave him alone for real. Knowing her, if it got that far, she'd make sure it was kept quiet too. Wouldn't do her any good to have the

media, official or otherwise, talking about how pathetic he was any more that they already did.

He turned and lowered his gaze, hoping that if he seemed submissive enough this would go smoothly. If her typical reaction of not standing for anyone slandering the Bakugou name held up, it might work in his favour. The only thing stopping him was himself.

“Todoroki. He’s the one lying.” He said, keeping his eyes on the floor. There was only two ways this could go and he was silently praying for the better of them.

“The kid you’re bullying?” she scoffed, sounding amused if anything.

“I’m not- He’s...” he couldn’t believe he was even thinking about this, but what was the worst that could happen? That she’d kick him out? He was heading out anyway and she’d done worse for much less before. “He’s... the one bullying me. He- he’s turned the whole class against me. They... they hate me.”

He didn’t deem it necessary to add ‘*more than they did before*’.

Katsuki made sure to hold his breath, not daring look up, to let her see the dampness forming in his eyes. He wasn’t weak. But saying it out loud had a completely different impact to just thinking it. He waited for a sound, anything. A quick intake of breath, indicating her annoyance, or a tut of exhaustion at having to deal with more of his shit.

A laugh, so loud and sudden, he’d not expected. Her nails digging sharply into the flesh between his neck and shoulder however, more than expected and so hard he had to push her hand away. Letting himself take a step back to face her the mirth in her expression was heart-breaking to see.

“Good on him, maybe experiencing what it’s like to be on the receiving end will knock some sense into your thick head!” she laughed, striking the side of his head.

Katsuki couldn’t help his jaw dropped as she brushed amused tears from her eyes. This was a gross miscalculation on his part. He eyed the door, his shoes and his bag trying to calculate how he should move to escape. The Hag finally stops laughing, catching her breath as he tried to inch further away.

“Oh baby.” She started, cupping his cheeks again as she harshly

tugged him closer. “Don’t try to pin your own shortcomings on others. If your classmates hate you it’s because they have a reason to. Can’t say I’m surprised. You aren’t exactly an angel.”

The look in her eyes looked down right manic, and all he could think was that he’d rather be anywhere but here. He pretty sure he’s on the verge of full on crying, the hall has long since turned into a blurry mess.

“Todoroki was it? He’s just doing what any *normal* teenager would do, getting even. After your stunt at the Sports Festival you deserve it.”

She sighs as he sucks in a much need breath. The pain in his chest getting more intense with every second he spends thinking and concluding that she’s right. He was a moron for even imagining he could confide in her.

“Lie to me again, and I promise to make sure you’ll never want to lie again. If you so much as step a toe out of line during this camp I will make sure you never get a chance to make another mistake either. Do you understand?”

Katsuki barely contained his growl as he attempted to free himself from her hold. Her grip only tightened.

“Do. You. Understand? Answer me, baby.”

It hurt, and not just because her nails were starting to scrap at his hairline, or the fact that his teeth were on the verge of snapping under the pressure he was using to hold back the tears, but because despite the ire in her eyes the softness in her voice never wavered. He wondered how long she had to practice to keep her voice so soft while all but threatening him. Or maybe it was innate. It was clear she meant every word of it. And he believed her.

“I understand.” He answered, plainly, emotionlessly. A single tear escaping to roll down his cheek.

“That’s a good boy.” She hummed, swatting away the tear. Adding a few belittling pats on his head, she pushed him towards the door. “Now go, train hard and behave yourself. Why not try to be like Izuku, hmm? Don’t cause any trouble for anyone. Maybe your classmates will hate you less? Have fun, Baby!”

Katsuki snatched his bag and shoes. He couldn’t have got out the front any faster if he tried.

Katsuki stood outside the gates to UA, as per the instructions Aizawa had given. Nitro sparked off to the most stable level he could get to, stabilizer worked into his pores and his travel bag by his feet. With his mind a mess of thoughts, his body aching from head to toe. He stood there and he waited. And waited. For far too long.

It was nearly 8 now, the set meeting time, and still no one else had shown up. Not even Four-eyes, who always showed up for things at least half an hour early. Katsuki had arrived with more than plenty of time to spare, plenty of time to stew in his own confusion and dwindling self-worth.

There was no one about this early, the few souls he had seen at the station were already well on their way to their destination, thankfully giving him nothing but passing glances. Seemed that keeping his head down was an effective way of going unnoticed as much as it grated on his pride; he could see the appeal and finally understood why Deku used to walk with his head hung so low Middle School. And he hated how that simple thought reminded him he was doing just what the Hag had told him.

Try to be like Izuku.

Katsuki was well aware of how shitty he'd made the Nerd feel for all those years. The Hag had tried her own hand at making him feeling just as bad once she found out. None of that shit came close to walking down the street with the knowledge that anyone could suddenly get the urge to chucking their trash at you, or curse your existence, or drag your only dream through the dirt.

Who are you trying to fool! You're no Hero!

Feeling the gut deep dread of expecting an attack from any corner, he had an inkling that Deku probably felt the same just walking down the halls of Aldera High. Experiencing it for himself was another thing altogether.

It was stupid really, letting her words get to him like that. He'd known for a long while now that his parents would rather have a child like Izuku. It had been crystal clear since the first time he misfired his

Quirk. Katsuki was too loud, too brash, too odd and altogether just too much. They would have preferred someone who was more reserved yet sociable and apparently the freaking best despite being a big ass cry baby. Someone the exact opposite of him. Didn't matter that he'd been working his ass off since that day to just earn a crumb of appreciation, didn't matter that all he wanted was to make her proud. To see her smile at him so genuinely they she did when she spoke about *Izuku*.

But he wasn't Deku and that was apparently a crime, one he'd been paying for since he first hurt the Nerd.

It was difficult to just stand and wait. Katsuki wanted to be doing something, anything. He thought of going for a quick walk to burn off his anxious energy but idea only made him more anxious. It was stupid and irrational as fuck but he worried that if he did wander off the others would leave without him. The nagging feeling that maybe he had been left behind already, that somehow he'd missed the pickup or misheard the instructions and had been left standing like a fool waiting for something that would never come, was impossible to ignore. Yet the logical side of his brain argued that Aizawa, as much of a nuisance Katsuki was to him, wouldn't do that. He was fine and everyone else was just cutting it close. Not that he cared what everyone else was doing, it was a clear fact to him that they didn't give two fucks about him either. He wouldn't let himself waste his precious energy on Extras.

The Hag had to be right about them too. Like she was right about everything. They hated him for a reason. They'd made no effort to hide how standoffish they were from the get-go. From that very first day they all regarded him with a cold air of judgment. Now they had a solid reason to hate him, a reason that was backed up by a terms worth of angered comments and the words of one Green haired twerp who was stupid enough to trust in a socially inept, temperature challenged asshole.

Fuck. Just thinking about it was making him want to blow up. Though the more he thought, the more obvious it seemed that none of them had ever liked him to begin with. Maybe Kirishima and the Squad were just messing with him like he'd first thought. Stringing him along to see how long it would take him to realize it was all pretend. Laughing behind his back at how stupid he was as they dragged him about and wasted his time. Time he could have spent training.

Who'd want you around either way? You're no fun and you just ruin

everything!

Snapping his eyes shut and shaking his head hard barely got the stupid voice to shut up. That voice that was getting too loud to simply brush off. It was starting to sound more and more like himself, less like the Hag. He couldn't decide if he should be worried about that or not with all the other shit going on.

He paused his thoughts at a series of pings coming from his pocket. He was going to ignore it when it began to go off incessantly. Packing away those troubling thoughts Katsuki retrieved his phone, unlocking it to see what all the fuss was about.

The Summer Camp group chat.

It allowed him some faint feeling of involvement with a class that would rather he not exist at all. He hadn't even been aware of it until the day the Hag had let him out, and even then it had taken him a few hours to gather himself to even find the strength to do something as normal as picking up his phone.

Even though he'd been forcibly removed from the General chat (and this new one a few times over going by the notifications he had stacked up) Aizawa had made it mandatory for them all to be included in this one. Even if he had wanted to leave he was stuck.

Most of the Extras had even set stupid nicknames for each other. Majority went for their Hero Names, under the impression that doing so was preparing for the future, or some shit like that.

Katsuki hadn't bothered to change his. Was still mostly undecided on his Hero name still, with a severe lack of guidance none that might be remotely good were coming to mind. No one else changed it for him either, no stupid 'Bro' tacked on to the end of his name. A subtle way of showing how non-inclusive their group was now. He hated how much that hurt. When would it stop?

He scrolled through the string of new messages, never contributing but always reading as he always had. The messages that had disturbed him were just another series of things he had no business caring about. He really should have just put the damn thing on mute.

[RED RIOT] Anyone there yet?

[RED RIOT] I know Sensei said be there at 8 or get left behind but...

[RED RIOT] he won't really do that

[RED RIOT] Right?

[RED RIOT] Am like 90% certain I'll be late T.T

Katsuki hated that he found his lips creeping up in a smile. Shitty Hair was probably the most gullible of the Squad after the Sparkplug, Kaminari. Of course he'd believe it if Sensei told him that. Although to be honest Katsuki wouldn't put it past Aizawa to do something that drastic either. His phone pinged again, and the text began moving up the screen.

[PINKY] He better not! I'm still on the train :/

[RED RIOT] Super manly, making your own way! But I refer you back to my earlier question :P

[PINKY] well, I *am* on the train, so no, not their yet babes <3

[SHOUTO] I believe Aizawa-sensei would definitely leave the stragglers behind.

[PINKY] WOW, Todo! Thanks for the reassurance XD

[SHOUTO] You're welcome, Ashido-chan.

[SHOUTO] Kirishima, to answer your question, no I have not yet arrived.

[URAVITY] Me and Tsu-chan are almost there. In like 10 mins maybe? Iida-kun said he had to stop somewhere first.

A lull in the chat had Katsuki taking a breath. He'd never really have the kind of interaction the rest of 1-A shared, not in chat form or otherwise. Talking was just too difficult and he couldn't explain it. Witnessing friendship in real time, even in a chat form, had him yearning for what little of it he'd had with the Squad. He might play himself as tough and unfeeling, but he thought they'd understood he appreciated them regardless. Another ping and he was looking down.

[URAVITY] Is no one actually there yet?!!

[URAVITY] If Sensei is serious he'll be going to camp alone lol!

[DEKU] Just arrived! 😊

[DEKU] Kacchan's here too!

Katsuki hadn't even looked up from his phone before the sickening, gut churning ache brewed to life. And when he did, spying the mop of green coming up the hill at a steady pace confirmed the worst. They were alone... together. And all he could hear was the Hag's voice echoing around his head.

Why can't you be like Izuku.

Izuku doesn't cause problems for anyone.

Be like Izuku.

Any thoughts he had of giving it a chance, of maybe approaching things like Deku would, were cast out the second he saw green. Talking was the last thing he felt capable of right now. Nevermind talking about shit that *he* should be dealing with alone anyway.

That was before he considered his position. Any of the other assholes could show up at any second now and with all of them out to get him he'd be screwed. Just glancing the Nerd's direction might be enough to set the losers off. Knowing Deku, he wouldn't have a choice. It's probably what he needed, to have the option taken from him. To be forced into sorting his shit out the *Deku* way.

Be like Izuku.

Be like Izuku.

Screw this!

It wasn't going to happen and he knew it. Didn't matter that in less than a second he'd told himself over and over just how fucking hilarious it would be to see the look on everyone's faces if he and Deku ended up "besties", it would never get that far anyway. Katsuki knew he sucked at heart to hearts. Bearing all his weakness wasn't exactly a Heroic thing to do.

Still, the possibility of *might work out* pushed him towards the uncomfortable territory.

Be like Izuku.

The idea was awkward to even think about but at least he could say he tried if the Hag ever asked. Yeah, he'd let the Nerd ask his dumb

questions. Not too many or for too long, there's no way he could fuck this up right?

It's fine. It'll be fine... I'll just... fuck... forget it, the hell am I thinking?! Just ignore him. I'm just gonna fuck up... better just get through camp first.

Katsuki made sure he had the most indifferent of scowls on his face before looking back at the chat, his phone chiming away in his tightening grip. It did nothing to slow his racing heart. He could feel the nitro-sweat start to clam up his palms already even with the layer of stabilizing cream holding it back.

[URAVITY] Be careful Deku-kun!

[PINKY] Yeah just watch yourself, Midoriya!

[DEKU] Uh... Why????

[PINKY] The hill might still be wet from the rain last night.

[PINKY] You know, slippery?

[DEKU] What rain???? It's been dry all week?

Katsuki quickly muted the chat, forcing his phone away in his pocket, already tired of the not so subtle digs at him just being in remote breathing distance of Deku. He looked up. The Greenette was mashing away on his phone, attention fully focused there. He stopped barely a foot away from him. The stupid Nerd never did have a grasp on the concept of personal space. As much as it was annoying the sight of something so familiar sparked a flutter of calm in his restless mind.

The urge to snap and remind the Nerd to stay away was snuffed out when those shiny green eyes looked up and locked with his own.

"Hey, Kacchan!" Deku started, sounding cheery and as determined as ever. A blinding smile plastered on his face. Katsuki felt like walking a hundred yards in the opposite direction.

Just let the idiot speak, that's his thing, he'll mumble away until the rest show up. Do not engage, do not engage!

Katsuki grumbled and tried to look aloof. Key word being tried. He was pretty sure he looked as awkward as he felt.

"So, Kacchan... how's summer been?"

Suddenly Katsuki felt like he wanted to make a point of staying quiet. The Extras could come over the hill at any second and he didn't want to risk a shouting match he'd get blamed for over something as silly as how shitty his summer had been so far.

Fuck... since when had he become such a pussy? The least he could do was give the Nerd an answer. Something short and to the point. Something that wouldn't encourage further conversation. The chances of that working out with Deku were next to none, but once a tryer always a tryer.

"The fuck do you care? Mind your own business, Nerd." He snapped quietly as he didn't have the energy to be loud right now and finding comfort in the familiar act of brushing him off. He was itching to let off a few small sparks, not just a way of dissuading Deku but he could let himself get lost in the cathartic feeling that came along with it.

"It's just... you looked exhausted when I bumped into you the other day, I was worried."

"Yeah? Well fucking don't! Worry about yourself stupid self Nerd." Katsuki huffed.

Deku hummed acknowledgement and things stayed quiet, but Katsuki knew better. He could practically hear the gears turning in Deku's head. Years of bullying had taught Deku to be quiet, though he'd always loud when he was thinking. Muttering intelligibly under his breath, chin pinched between his fingers, gaze focused on something that only existed in his mind. Then it stopped and Katsuki braced for the inevitable. The Nerd might have a New Flashy Quirk and be a lot more ballsy now, but he was still the same old Deku that never knew when to quit.

Never in a million years would Katsuki admit to finding solace in that little fact.

Deku mumbled quietly before curious eyes met his again, "Why didn't you tell Kirishima you were here when he asked?"

Katsuki's mind froze for all but a second before deciding he didn't need or want to know the thinking that led to that question. Of course Deku would notice. He knows exactly why he didn't answer and he's certain Deku does too. The Nerd may be a *Nerd*, but he was also a complete idiot.

That question was for everyone but me, you stupid Deku!

No one in their Class cared whether he was there or not, least of all Kirishima. In fact they'd all probably prefer he wasn't there at all. Well, tough luck. The only reason he was even in that chat was because Aizawa said he had to be, and there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell of him missing camp! They were going to have to deal with it just like he was dealing with it.

Snapping at Deku might make him feel a little better but he knew it wouldn't help matters at all. Any witness was probably going to be out for his blood. Not that he wouldn't be able to take them on in a head-to-head, it would just be preferable not to cause any more trouble for himself (and others) at least until after camp. He'd rather save any knew problems until after they'd at least left Musutafu.

But still, he was angry at the Nerd for turning on him after all this time, paying him any attention, positive or otherwise, seemed like too decent a thing to do given the circumstances.

Katsuki growled instead, rolled his eyes and willed any deity that might have mercy on him to send something, *anything*, to distract the Nerd.

Unfortunately, no god had ever favoured him.

"Kacchan? Um, did you fight with Kirishima?" Deku starts, not a single stutter mars his speech and that's enough to let Katsuki know he won't let this go without an answer. Fuck. If it weren't for bad luck he'd have none at all.

"You really can't just stay out of people's shit can you?"

Nerd's sports an awkward yet smug smile and shrugs. Katsuki can feel the hidden frustration bleeding off him at his non-answer. Didn't matter. Deku could be dying and his answer the only cure and he'd be no more intent on enlightening him. The murderous glare that would have sent Middle-school Deku running for the hills had no effect, and Katsuki's already short patience was wearing thin.

"So, is that a yes? Is that why you didn't hang out at the Mall on Friday? Or the Arcade?" Deku carries on, as if to obliviously drive home just how brilliant his new best friends are. "Is that why everyone is acting so... weird?"

Katsuki had to look at him at that, "Hah? The fuck do you mean weird?"

Deku brought a hand up to pinch at his chin again. Katsuki knew was in for a long drabble. So long as Deku kept talking he was convinced this would go swimmingly. Nevermind the track history of every word Deku said pushing him over the edge.

“Ever since that day you blew up your desk... no before that. It started when Todoroki-kun punched you in Heroics class I think. After that, Kirishima, Kaminari, all of *your* friends starting hanging around with us. They-”

“They aren’t my fucking *friends*, Deku.” Katsuki interrupted, hopefully hiding the hurt behind simply saying it out loud for the first time.

“Uh, oh, okay... Well, they started distancing themselves from you around then right? Ashido said it was because you were being an ‘ass’, ah, her words not mine! Kirishima was pretty quiet though, has been for a while, which makes me think something happened. Specifically with him? And the others are backing him up? Did something happen? I want to say it has something to do with Todoroki too, but I can’t figure how that would link up.”

When Katsuki offered no response Deku just sighed, and another few moments of blissful silence passed. Katsuki was actually impressed at how close Deku was getting already with just the bare bones, fucking scary. Would Deku do something if he knew? Obviously he would, his fucking self-sacrificial Hero complex would probably having him blame himself though. Katsuki might not really like the Nerd, but they’d been friends once upon a time, until the Hag ruined it and then Katsuki fucked it beyond repair. He didn’t want him fussing over this, it wasn’t his problem.

Yet there was something else naggin at Katsuki’s mind. The musings of a Nerd involved in what the of the class were doing, wouldn’t be speculating about it. And Katsuki hated that the simple possibility of him not being involved was making him feel relief like it was nobody’s business.

But the voice in his head, the one that sounded like the Hag kept warning him otherwise. Katsuki had to agree with it. Telling the Nerd would be like opening the floodgates. If Deku was a part of getting him in shit with Aizawa then would he just report back to Todoroki? If Katsuki decided to share just how bad things were, would Deku make sure it just got worse? Was this his way of getting revenge? In all honesty Katsuki had never thought Deku would be the type for revenge. Years of him just shouldering the abuse was enough to

evidence that. Then again...

Katsuki wasn't idiot. He wasn't about to give anyone a chance to catch him off guard. Not a single reason to pity him.

"It's got nothing to do with you, so just fucking forget about it Deku." Katsuki tells him, crossing his arms for good measure. Signalling closed off, end of discussion. Again, Deku sighs and it's taking every ounce of willpower Katsuki has not to cuss him out for being annoying as shit.

"Kacchan... I'm sorry."

Glare and energy renewed, Katsuki shoots daggers at him, "The fuck are you apologising for?!"

"You got in trouble. With Aizawa Sensei."

Katsuki suppressed a shout and managed to remark with something barely resembling a civil tone, "No shit! The fuck did you think would happen, huh? You think he'd let anyone get away using their Quirk in the classroom and destroying school property in the process huh?!"

His chest heaved, this was as much about convincing himself he deserved what he got for doing something so stupid as it was about convincing Deku to drop it. Hoping for once, just once, that Deku would maybe get that he wasn't in the mood.

"Well, no of course not but... I tried to explain what happened in hall but I got so flustered when he asked. I wasn't expecting it! Todoroki didn't help either. Which is weird because he's usually so quiet and composed but he was really... I don't know, invested? Insisted that you attacked him. I know you didn't though, not on purpose."

Katsuki silently processes, so Deku really *didn't* turn on him? It was just a misunderstanding? Just like way back then... when his Quirk was still new and he couldn't control it all... The teacher's had assumed that his actions had been deliberate. Had Aizawa assumed the same? Assumed the Nerd's jumpiness was what? Nerves due to coercion? And Icy Hot, he was manipulating things on all fronts? Twisting the plot and warping perceptions. Not just lying to Sensei but Deku too?! Some friend huh.

"What do you mean to *know* I didn't?"

"Just didn't sound like you."

Katsuki didn't want to trust that little hope starting to bud. But in the dull overcast space that had become his life, that small shining beacon of light... it was something he wouldn't let go. That Deku was maybe still on his side was the best news he'd heard in what felt like eternity.

"Icy Hot is an asshole." He says simply.

"So you *did* attack him?" Deku questions, voice pitching higher as he asks.

"*I didn't* attack anyone! Icy Hot is an ignorant asshole and a fucking liar." He answered, probably the closest to a truly uncivil tone he'd spoken with the entire conversation. Though his calmer tone up until now didn't come close to anywhere near how friendly they spoke when they were kids. Deku just blinked at him clearly at a loss. "Fuck, he... just watch what you tell him. Dipshit can't keep his mouth shut."

"What do you mean by that? Kacchan?" that mystery detective tone entering his voice, like he was close to cracking another part of the puzzle.

"The fuck does it matter now, Deku. It's done. Just forget about it. Or I'll kick your ass."

Quiet settles once more, and this time, seems like it might actually last more than a few seconds. Katsuki chances a look at his phone, ignoring the piling chat notifications and checking the time. He sighs.

Not even ten to!!! The hell! Why is time going to fucking slow right now!!!

Trust him when he says, having any more company was the last thing on his list of wants but right now anyone would be better than standing a foot away from the root of all most of his problems. As if a few minutes of awkward conversation were going to make up for everything. He knew he was a hopeless case when it came to approaching the subject of emotions and apologies and just about everything else. The real him wasn't someone people confided in or wanted to know about. Nor did it line up with the image that they had already created. Didn't come close to what his parents wanted and needed him to be either.

Fuck, he hated being so useless and yet needing to be useful at the same time.

The summer breeze swept through his hair, brushed against his palms

that were already heavy with a slick film of sweat, the mask of sealant rendered useless. He allowed himself to let of a few small bursts while he still had the chance. Though Deku would understand his need to do it. Had been the one to suggest it when the problem first came to light over a decade ago. Nerd doesn't flinch this time. A testament to just how much things have changed between them even without deep meaningful words.

Katsuki chanced looking the Nerd's way, silently cursing the fact he's looking up and thinks about everything that makes Deku... well, Deku.

Be more like Izuku

He can't get the Hags words out of his head. Can't help but think that being more like Izuku might get him in even more shit. Afterall the Nerd was more of a troublemaker than him these days. He might play dumb but Katsuki knows there was more to the whole Stain incident than he let on. Still it's what she asked for... his chest tightens at the simple thought of screwing up again. The clock was ticking down for him on both sides. Aizawa would probably kick him out if he fucked up again. The Hag would pull him out before he even got a chance to explain anything if given half a chance. He feels sick to his stomach.

It surprises him though, just how calm he feels looking back at Deku. Standing next to his supposed bane. That small tingling of anxiety is still there, he's acutely aware of it trying to overtake his senses. Telling him he should be anywhere but this close to Deku. But this conversation had been... pretty nice, he guesses. Pleasant even. Minimal shouting. He'd got a few points across and got some clarification of his own to boot. Is this what functional felt like? What being normal is?

Fucking hell that was so much effort!

Even with the pain wracking his every sudden movement he feels calm, at peace in the knowledge that even though his pride won't let him admit to Deku just how shit everything is right now, the Nerd isn't changing. That one constant is all he thinks he needs right now. If fate allows it, by the end of this camp Katsuki will have everything sorted. And perhaps everything will be normal for him. Without or without the extras.

"Do you want to?"

Of course the quiet they shared wouldn't last too long, that would be

asking way too much. Those few minutes were definitely a record high though.

His eyes snap confused back towards Deku who's looking at him with barely contained anticipation, green eyes glistening with intense energy, the odd speck of gold filtering forth.

"Hah? Want to what?"

"Kick my ass? A- as training. Y-you know?" Katsuki narrows his stare. "But only if you want to o-of course. I haven't really fought you properly since learning to control my Quirk bit better, so... yeah, if you want to, Kacchan."

It's crazy, dizzying even, to watch Deku go through so many emotions in one longwinded sentence. The familiar gut-wrenching nervousness as he stumbles to start. The deep seated frustration from not having made the progress he clearly wanted with his Quirk; that Katsuki could relate to. And lastly the blinding determination as he decided he was certain, fist clenched (holding back from saying any more) and smiling at *his Kacchan* as if he'd never said and did horrible things to him for years.

That smile that had been haunting him for as long as he can remember. Had always made him feel inferior, looked down on and not good enough. But right now it was letting him know Deku was actually there, maybe not *for* him. But willing to spend the time with him. Even if it wasn't much of a consolation, even if it was Deku of all the fuckers, it was making that sick feeling fade just a little.

This could work, training was training, a clear part of school work they couldn't avoid. Plus Deku was the one asking! *They* couldn't argue with it if Deku was the one instigating it, right? Maybe this was the first step on the road to fixing things for real. Perhaps he'd manage to actually make that apology. Or maybe it was a disaster waiting to happen.

Fuck it, couldn't get much worse.

"Sure Deku. Whatever. You better not half-ass it or you'll regret ever asking." He turned away, definitely not to aid himself in hiding the smirk playing on his lips or the unexplainable heat in his cheeks.

Fucking hell! This feels weird as heck!

Being civil with Deku was like being on a different planet.

“Wha-! Really?! O-okay Kacchan! Wow! Y-you sure? You’d really want to train with me?!”

“You want me to change my fucking mind?!” Deku slapped his hands over his mouth and determinedly shook his head. “I said I’d kick your ass Deku, and that’s exactly what I’m gonna do! Because you really don’t stand a chance at beating me! I’m going to be Number 1!” he told him with a menacing grin.

Deku’s eyes only seemed to shine more. Good, because Katsuki wasn’t going to make anything easier for him, not when he was still a little weakling. Quirk or not, Deku was getting his ass thoroughly kicked.

Satisfied, Katsuki settled and let his mind go blank. Hopefully, Sensei or god forbid someone might show up soon. However, the downside to this new found amicability was Deku apparently taking this rival moment as an invitation to keep talking.

“Looking forward to camp, Kacchan?”

He hates how easy it suddenly was to just keep talking. Maybe he was just dying for some social interaction. Maybe nearly a week isolated from everything was doing him wonders. “More than a week surrounded by assholes. Nah. Aizawa’s training better be hell to make up for it.”

Deku laughs, actually fucking laughs and Katsuki locks his jaw to stop himself from his habitual response of ‘*stop fucking laughing at me*’. Jumping to such conclusions never got him anywhere.

“Something funny, Nerd?”

“Knowing you, you’ve been training all summer!”

Katsuki thinks and finds himself briefly reliving the last few days. The nightmare that was his life because he still wasn’t good enough. He had been *training* because he needed it. He sucked in a breath and shallow breath. Deku didn’t need to know the details. Didn’t need to know just how extreme his training has to be, or how pathetic his *Kacchan* really is.

He shrugs in affirmation, a silent *so what if I have been*, and Deku mumbles under his breath.

“Hah!? Deku! The fuck are you whispering about?!”

“You’re always training.”

“How else am I gonna be the best if I don’t keep in top shape idiot?! How the fuck else am I gonna get to be Number One?!”

“Well I get that, but you should really relax from time to time! I’m pretty sure All Might takes a break from time to time. Aren’t you looking forward to camp stuff! Like when we were kids, and your dad let us camp in your back garden that one time!”

Unfortunately Katsuki remembers it very clearly. Nerd had just been diagnosed Quirkless and Katsuki didn’t really know if that meant things were different or not. Nerd had always been fascinated with his explosions so his dumbass five year old self, in a bid to make the Nerd feel better, ended up sending the tent up in flames. Their first and last camp. And the beginning of Deku’s need to write down everything about Quirk’s.

“Yeah, I remember, and that didn’t end so well Deku. Hardly fun or *‘relaxing’*.”

“That’s not the point!” Deku exclaimed, only leaving Katsuki ten times more confused, *the fuck was his point then!* “After the practical’s and then fighting with Todoroki you-”

“Get your facts right Deku! Half and Half started those fights! Not me! You want to talk to someone about relaxing go talk to your petty Guard dog! Fucker was playing fetch before the stick even got tossed and somehow ended up with the stick up his ass!”

“He’s my friend, not my guard dog, Kacchan. And where did you even get that metaphor from!”

“Tch. Could’ve fooled me. Asshole follows you around everywhere Nerd. ”

Deku looks at him, complete disbelief on his face. An intense contrast to the delight he was expressing just a moment ago. Katsuki silently curses, could sense another lecture on the way when the worst possible happens.

“Midoriya.” A cool, monotone voice a little bit away interrupts.

Katsuki’s entire body freezes. He doesn’t try to contain his disdain at Todoroki’s arrival, nor does he make any move to distance himself from Deku as he approaches, even despite the warning in the

heterochromatic eyes.

He's far too busy trying calm his racing heart as he lets the asshole know he's not going to back down to even process the fact that Todoroki doesn't seem all that bothered by his closeness to Deku. Hot and cold even without the Quirk. Or just a really good actor.

Todoroki holds his gaze, completely unaffected.

Despite the resolve he was certain he'd found, Katsuki wavered. This was the last person he'd wanted showing up, literally anyone else would have been an improvement. And just when he was on his way to getting comfortable with talking to Deku. The one time he felt he might be remotely ready to actually say something. The Hag had fucking blanked him but Deku would at least question things he thinks.

Fucking world really had it out for him. The only thing stopping him was that little voice in his head reminding him that even if he tried it wouldn't make a difference.

You really think Deku of all people is going to fight for you after everything you did to him! Take a hint a fuck off! Better yet, take your own advice and-

Gritting his teeth, clenching his fists was all he could do to stop that voice from finishing that sentence. To stop himself from listening to it. It telling him what do to on top of everyone else was the last thing he needed.

"Todoroki-kun?" Midoriya singsongs questioningly. Of course the Nerd waves despite the fact he's only three feet away. Katsuki doesn't miss the hint of apprehension in his voice. He could only hope the Nerd was as bright as everyone seemed to think he is, that Katsuki once knew him to be. But hope was such an intangible thing, something he wasn't going to rely on. The only person he could trust was himself.

And if there was one thing he could trust himself to do, it was channel all his anger and annoyance into a scowl. So scowl he did.

Todoroki made himself comfortable standing directly across from Deku and within spitting distance of Katsuki. The Half and Half's dead stare isn't as unnerving with the Nerd here. The Icy Hot bastard meets his tempered scowl and quickly enough looks away disinterested. Katsuki smirks, taking every shred of that victorious feeling he can.

“You came early. And you came alone?” Todoroki starts, eyes darting Katsuki’s way. They don’t linger long before quickly snapping back to green.

Bored already, Katsuki takes a step back towards his belongings. The weird lie laced jargon the prude little rich boy was likely to end up spouting wasn’t something he wanted to listen to. And Deku too, of course. Though comparing him to the current company made Deku the all the more tolerable.

Still he couldn’t help but listen in, was hard not to when they were the only ones around this early on a quiet Friday morning.

“I couldn’t sleep! Guess I was excited about camp? I know the thing at the Mall was shocking but once it was over with I was kinda back to the buzz of everything else.”

“What *thing* at the mall?” Katsuki blurted out, right over Todoroki lamenting that he *wasn’t there to help*.

Help with what?!

“Huh? You didn’t hear? Last Friday, some of us went to the Mall to get a few things for camp and that Villain that attacked the USJ, Shigaraki, held me hostage. But it was okay, I’m okay! He got away, but no one got hurt... It was all in the class chat, didn’t you read it?”

“I’m not in the class chat, Nerd. What did the Handsy fucker want?” the Hero in him wanted specifics, specifics that realistically he knew he wouldn’t get. The fact that he hadn’t been there irked him in more ways than one.

“Um, just to... uh... talk. He vented about how unfair things were, how it was All Might’s fault.” Deku chuckled nervously, and Katsuki’s known him far too long, he’s knows that not the whole truth but he won’t press where he’s not wanted. “Hold on, why are you in the Camp chat and not the Class chat?”

“Doesn’t fuckin’ matter Deku!”

Deku stared blankly at him as if he’d just spoken a foreign language. Then that little glimmer sparked in his eyes again. “I’ll add you.”

“Don’t!”

“Don’t.”

Katsuki glared at Todoroki as Deku, choosing to be oblivious to their outburst, proceeded to add him to the General Class chat. His phone pinged with the notification. He wonders how long it'll last this time. How long before the others realise and remember they still don't want him there.

"There. You can stay caught up now Kacchan." Deku looks up at him smiling then looks confused between the two of them. Before settling a set of suspicious eyes on Todoroki. "Something wrong Todoroki-kun?"

Of course Todoroki denies all. And Deku, the moron, just accepts it! Katsuki felt like smacking the Nerd, or well, just shouting at the very least. For all the directness the Nerd took when approaching him, why, why oh why, didn't it apply to anyone else? Making a scene would be a quicker way of getting things out without outright saying the words that he couldn't make himself say. Standing around waiting for the game of 20 Questions to end just for Deku to figure out something he could find out if he just asked the one right question which he'd likely already thought up was not his idea of a fun time.

Half and Half drawls on about his own expectations for camp. Acting like everything going on behind the scenes is completely normal. The sound grated against the inside of his head like nails on a chalkboard.

"Shut the fuck up would you!" he snaps with no restraint.

They both look to him. Half and Half indifferent and Deku more or less disappointed.

"Kacchan! Todoroki-kun apologised to you, you could maybe meet him halfway you know?!"

"Hah?" Katsuki's eyes nearly bugged out of his head at the mention of such an absurdity. "The fuck are you talking about now? Apologised when?! For what?!"

Deku laughs, clearly disbelieving. "He apologised, for hitting you? Right before you blew up at him, he spoke to you, and said sorry for the fight in the gym... Right? That's the reason why I left you two alone. He said he wanted to apologise. You *did* apologise... Didn't you?"

Katsuki just stares at him. Before joining the Nerd in staring at the dual-coloured asshole.

The stunned look on the Candy Cane's face is worth all the second hand anxiety his brain is soaking up from this interaction alone. Like he wasn't expecting for Deku to turn and question him. His lips part, but before he can't get any words out Deku is talking again, and Katsuki had to admit this new, ballsy Deku is a force to be reckoned with. He'd been getting more confrontational since coming to UA, not so much that he was picking fights, but the Nerd wasn't taking shit from anyone. Kudos to him he guesses.

Being proved right, learning that Icy Hot really wasn't just lying to fucking Aizawa, but to Deku too was an added bonus. Manipulating the story *and* fucking lying to his friends! They might call Katsuki a Villain and a Monster, but he wasn't going to start lying to everyone just to cover his ass. He'd admit his faults no problem. Lying wasn't part of him. The Hag was adamant he always tell the truth or else.

Maybe he could use this if the bastard ever tried anything. The Candy Cane did value Deku's opinion and friendship so very much after all. The smugness he felt took form in a rare smile.

"Like I told you. Icy Hot's a fucking liar. I never heard any apology and I don't fucking expect one. It wasn't a big deal, didn't even hurt."

"That's not the point Kacchan!" Deku cried, he cut himself off before taking a deep breath. "Kacchan..."

They glared at each other.

"Deku."

Katsuki more than expects this to be pinned on him. Expects Todoroki to start spouting accusations and twisting the events to his advantage. However, Deku had something else in mind.

"Well, you can apologise now. Todoroki-kun?"

Icy Hot, seemed to be re-evaluating every choice he's ever made up to this point but in the end, seemed to consider his and Deku's friendship more highly than a petty grudge. His gaze lands on Katsuki and Deku's stays fixed on his Half and Half hair as he bows.

"I apologise for attacking you, Bakugou. It was... inappropriate of me to provoke you. Let's make sure it never happens again."

As good as Katsuki felt seeing the Half and Half bent double, all but begging for his forgiveness, it was dulled by the assholes choice of

words. He may as well have told him he didn't regret it and would do it again in a heartbeat if the need arose. Cocky bastard really seemed to think that Deku wouldn't catch on. He always does, eventually, especially when it came to his Kacchan.

Overlooking the fact that Deku was a little creepy in that regard, he had helped put Todoroki in this position. Katsuki felt like things would be going a little differently now with the Nerd thoroughly on his side when it came to Todoroki at least. This was good. Before he knows it none of this shit going on with the class will be of any consequence to him. He'll be able to focus on his studies completely, work on doing what his parents need of him. And everything would be back to normal, back to how it should be.

Deku catches his eye with a beaming smile, and Katsuki doesn't understand the strange, unfamiliar warmth that swells in his chest. It's not like the usual feeling of victory, or the even close to how he'd felt with the Squad. He doesn't even want to try to figure it out, believing it couldn't be anything good.

"Fighting again you two?" Aizawa's drone speech interrupted any and all hope he had of ever understanding what he was feeling in that moment when an anxious desire to please his teacher swarmed him instead.

Katsuki could barely contain the unexplainable guilt he felt when his teachers eyes lingered on him for a little too long. Already suspecting him to be the cause of any dispute, physical or otherwise. Katsuki made a point of taking a few steps away from them only disguising it as himself finding a more comfortable stance, all the while holding his teacher's gaze with (hopefully) a cool indifference. As his Sensei's eyes wandered back to Deku and Todoroki, he let himself breathe a little lighter.

"No Sensei, I was just apologising to Bakugou for my behaviour last week."

The look of approval Aizawa sent towards Icy Hot, even if his expression remained mostly unchanged felt like being dunked in boiling water. What made him so fucking great? Why the fuck was everyone else so fucking great?!

They didn't have to get chained up just to receive a medal on live TV!!!

That was hard to argue with. He'd never be seen as anything other than a trouble maker, not until he proved himself.

“Hmm. That’s good to hear. Let’s try and keep things civil shall we? You all have everything with you?” Aizawa carried on, addressing them all.

“Yes sensei!” Deku chimed in, before starting into a ramble at break neck speed.

Katsuki decided to blank out what followed, only to notice another figure (as far he could tell) hiding behind their Teacher. The messy purple hair was a great indicator to Katsuki of just who this was, though why the guy was hiding was unknown.

Katsuki doesn’t even know why, but he slips into a more comfortable stance as the purple haired gen-ed student steps a little further out, more or less joining them and remaining silent. So comfortable in fact that he speaks without thinking.

“The fuck are you doing here, Eyebags?”

Eyebags, aka Mindfucker, aka Shinsou, stopped in his tracks, stared at him for a moment. Just long enough for Katsuki to notice the strange pattern on his hoodie. Not dressed in UA uniform, but baggy dark jeans and an oversized grey hoodie hanging on his shoulders. The design looked like a dozen or so variations of cats mishmashed together. Katsuki could safely assume the guy probably liked cats.

Deku practically shouts his greeting and Todoroki... he looks like he’s seeing the guy for the first time ever, was clearly too preoccupied with getting one over on his dad the entire sports festival and then wussing out at the last second after everything.

The look on Shinsou’s face is one of utter confusion, as though it would be all that shocking for Katsuki to just strike up a conversation with him. He supposes so. It’s not like they really know each other. They’ve only interacted twice, once before the Sports Festival and the most recent being last week in the Development studio. Katsuki had all but blanked on his existence until the second time.

Yeah, he supposes it would be surprising for him to just randomly start talking to him. So much so he instantly regrets even opening his mouth. His tone probably wasn’t all that welcoming either. He swears that Todoroki is getting ideas about how to turn this on him already.

Should’ve just stayed quiet. Not like anybody wants to hear what you have to say anyway!

Even still the Gen-ed student answers him, his confusion persisting, but a quirk of smile to his lips. "Here to ask Aizawa-sensei one last thing before you all disappear for a week Boomer."

Katsuki felt his eye twitch at the sudden nickname. He was still acutely aware of Aizawa still watching their exchange though. Probably waiting for Katsuki to shout and threaten him or skip that go straight to blowing him up... or maybe just curious to see what would happen. Katsuki wasn't a hypocrite, he wasn't going to snap at him for using a nickname when he used them all the time.

Shinsou turned to Aizawa. Katsuki couldn't help but eavesdrop on their conversation even as he turned himself away.

"You got all the material I left you?" Aizawa started.

"Yeah. It's easy enough to understand but we're still training when you get back right? I don't want to mess this up."

The Hero hummed affirmation. "Yes, I'll contact you otherwise. Just believe that you won't mess up. Keep working on what we spoke about, you'll see the improvement. We'll talk more about the process of moving up after the break."

Their conversation faded to the back of his mind, as Katsuki no longer wished to hear any more details about how his teacher was likely planning to replace him. That's what is was right? Aizawa's *permanent solution*? It had to be getting rid of him. He was too much of a trouble maker even though he really wasn't trying to be. He wanted what everyone else here did, and that was to become a Hero. Shinsou had better be the fucking best underdog ever if he wants to have even a chance of taking his spot.

Good fucking luck to him, because Katsuki wasn't going to go quietly.

This week at camp was going to solidify his place. He'd work so fucking hard that Aizawa would have to reconsider. He'd show him, just like he was going to show everyone else. He'd ignore every jab and do this on his own, he didn't need them. Didn't need anyone. It was just a matter of finding the right formula, of not compromising his true self too much. Of finding what it was he was lacking so much.

He feels before he sees Deku creeping into his space, shocking the Nerd when he turns to look at him, and sharp glares that silently asks "What?"

“I didn’t know you and Shinsou-kun were friends?” there’s more disbelief in his words than anything judging and Katsuki almost laughs. He huffs instead.

“We’re not.”

Further disbelief on the Nerd’s face lasts a moment before he’s smiling at him. “Okay Kacchan.”

And that’s a whole puzzle Katsuki doesn’t even want to start figuring out, because Deku always means something else when he does that weird smile and acceptance thing. Been that way since he first started talking.

The next few minutes involved the stragglers rolling in and before long all but one of 1-A had arrived. The sound of more voices joining them makes his stomach twist. Mina, Sero, Kaminari and several others racing up the hill towards them. Uraraka and Tsuyu right behind them. Then with a bursting gust of wind Iida raced past them all to arrive bang on five minutes early.

Katsuki only got pushed further out of the ring they made. All the while adjusting his bag any time he felt like snapping. The pain grounded him, kept him aware of the fact he deserved it. He tried to not let it bother him but it was hard when the only thing he could think about was how little he really mattered. Maybe he should just head back home, lock himself in the closet and never come out again. Things would be so much simpler that way, for everyone.

A car pulling up the steep hill caught his attention, and then, fashionably late, Shitty Hair steps out. No, not Shitty Hair, Kirishima. He can’t call him that anymore. Sero didn’t want his nickname, it was likely the others didn’t want theirs either. Heck why was he even bothering to think on it, they weren’t talking to him, it really didn’t matter. Besides what he called them in his head was between him and the little voice that lived there.

As Shitty Hair grabbed his stuff Katsuki stood, hands in his pockets, glaring anywhere they weren’t and ignoring a conversations he had no part in. That was until an exclaimed curse of ‘shoot’ had him looking back to Shitty Hair. He’d dropped his bag, the zipper undone a fraction a few items flying astray, as he fumbled in his hurry to get them. Unnecessary, given that Aizawa was still thick in conversation with Shinsou and their ride was also absent.

Before he knew it Katsuki had taken a few steps forward. No one else

had even noticed Shitty hair on his knees. No matter how hard Katsuki tried to hate him, it just wasn't happening. Even if Shitty Hair didn't want anything to do with him, didn't need the help, the part of Katsuki's brain hardwired to help the moron just wouldn't shut up.

He stalled when the car door opened. A woman, tall with long dark hair, messily tied back stepped out, her eyes a similar tone of red as Kirishima's. His mother no doubt. A fear gripped Katsuki's lower gut as she stepped over to the Redhead. His own past experiences warned him this wouldn't end well.

He could see it already, she'd slap him across the back of the head, berate him for being so clumsy and for not looking after his things with more care. It wasn't his place to interfere. What goes on within a family is between them. The same way his own problems at home where his own to deal with. All he could do was watch as the woman crouched down beside his classmate... all the while his mind won't stop screaming at him.

She's going to hit him. Stop her! The fuck are you just watching for! Isn't this why you want to be a Hero? To stop shit like this?! Fuck, fuck, fuck, why can't I move?

Her hand reached forward and Katsuki couldn't stop himself. He rushed towards them, blood rushing through his ears deafening him to the sound that came from their lips. He only stopped when her hand landed on him.

It was dizzying to watch, when instead of cursing him or berating his incompetence she helped him up, one hand resting on his shoulder, the other lifting the last few things that had rolled beyond Shitty Hair's reach. A smile on her face as she laughed, showing off a shining set of sharp teeth. Then standing together, taller than her son by several inches, she hugged him. Squeezed him tight until the redhead gasped and complained about being embarrassed.

The others had taken notice then, whooping and muttering about being him being a mummy's boy. Blocking the view Katsuki had and giving him an opportunity to recover himself. Luckily no one had noticed.

The calmness left him feeling so deflated and empty. Why hadn't she hit him? He'd done something so stupid and that could've easily been avoided in front of everyone. He'd *embarrassed her!* And nothing came of it? If it had been him, the Hag would have snapped and only made

things more difficult, dragged him home and set his straight.

He wondered what Kirishima did to earn his mother's confidence. To be able to make mistakes and not have his very existence put into question because of it. To being able to mess up, even with an audience, and only get hugged and loved in the end.

Should have asked when you had the chance.

Was he really that much of a fuck up? Were the others right to push him away, not just because he was a disgusting excuse of a human being but because he was bound to pull them down with him? Was he just that unlovable, even to them? Could they see what his parents saw? What everyone else saw? Was Katsuki the only person that couldn't see it?

With a sharp inhale he braced himself and returned to his abandoned bag, hoisting the heavy weight up and relishing the sting as he settled it back on bruised shoulders.

"You seem down." Aizawa started, having crept beside him. Must be done chatting with Mindfuck he noted, anything to ignore the thoughts in his head. "Everything alright?"

"I'm fine, Sensei. Lay off." He gritted out without looking up.

"It's okay to not be okay you know."

Katsuki turned to glare at him, and the generally unassuming gaze of his teacher unsettled him a little.

It was just as domineering as always but now it felt like maybe he should squirm under that judgement. This man, whom he thought would take his side even a little, who'd defended him in front of a stadium of Heroes, the same man who had been so quick to dismiss the possibility of him being innocent.

The silent questions those eyes asked could hold the answers to all his troubles. The look was gone as soon as it came and his teacher's attention elsewhere.

"Try to behave yourself Bakugou. I really don't want to write up another report involving you anytime soon."

The Hero really had given up on him. That's what it felt like at least.

Katsuki felt himself shrivelling up, his stomach much too tight and knotted to function properly. This feeling becoming all too common and he didn't think it wasn't the type to get any easier to handle.

Laughter erupted from the nearby crowd of students.

He simply glared at the group before him all happy smiles and chitchat, even Deku who was enthralled in the conversation with Floaty and the Frog Girl. Then he heard his phone ping and reluctantly he pulled it out to check. It was the class chat as he'd guessed. The one Deku had just added him to. Why the fuck were they using it when they were right next to each other, fucking morons. As he read though, it became clear to him.

[URAVITY] Eww! >o< Something stinks in here!

[PINKY] Yeah, who forgot to take out the trash?!

[CHARGEOLT] Don't worry guys, I got this!!!

His screen blinked black, the messages vanished, a new notification appeared [You have been removed from the chat].

He would deny forever just how much seeing that hurt. How his chest twisted in kind with his knotted guts as he read it. He looked up at the sound of more laughing. Kaminari with a bright smile on his face, Sero and Ashido laughing with him; even a few others seemed happy about it, or maybe something unrelated. Not that it mattered.

Without him, everyone seemed so much happier. Even his parents did. There was an acute lack of shouting when he'd been locked up. It was for the best, he convinced himself. He wondered if that alert was already buried in another stream of useless nonsense and drabble. Would Deku even notice? Did he really care at all?

"You okay?" he heard Shinsou whisper coming into his space, just as creepily quiet and inquiring as Aizawa. Instinctively Katsuki locked his phone, stowing it away in his pocket at lightning speed. "What was that?"

"Does fucking no one here understand personal space! piss off and mind your own business, Mindfuck!" he snaps, barely holding back the urge to push him away.

With his hands up in surrender Shinsou stepped back anyway. "Sorry. You just... you looked..."

“What?! Angry? Pissed? Like I was about to blow up? What?!” if anyone asked he wouldn’t be able to tell them why he was angry right now.

“Bakugou!” Aizawa warned.

He heaves in breaths to calm himself. It didn’t work.

Shinsou watched him patiently and when Katsuki glared right at him he spoke. “You looked sad.”

How obvious was he, that someone he didn’t even know could read him like a book? Were the others able to see how much this really got to him, in spite of his efforts to carry on indifferently. With a deep breath he doubled down on his glare, features schooled into the most angry expression he felt capable of making in that moment.

“Do I look fucking sad to you, Mindfuck?”

Shinsou rolled his eyes, “Not everyone is sad in the same way Boomer.”

Just then as the bus pulled up, Shinsou turned to start down the hill, he paused looking back, as the rest of 1-A headed forward.

“You know, Bakugou. I don’t know what’s going on... but you really don’t have to try so hard. Just be yourself yeah? You’re gonna be a great Hero either way.”

Katsuki watched him go, stunned by the motivating impact of his words. And wondering why he ever considered being changing himself was an option.

Be like Izuku.

Yeah, no. Fuck that shit. There was only one Bakugou Katsuki and he was going to rule this summer camp.

Chapter End Notes

Now that a things are set up the worst can get to happening. As i said I've split this big boy chapter up so next one will be sometime next week (not several months away).

Let me know what you all think of this one, it took way too long to figure out!

If you're interested, you can follow my twitter, which i made ages ago for all my writing needs. (I was using Gab but I found i don't really like it.)

Click the link if you was stay up to date or just come talk! My DM's are always open! I'll try to reply in a timely fashion :)
<https://twitter.com/SuperiorKats>

Also quickfire questions;

Is there any character you're dying to see the perspective of?

A Summer Like No other Part 2

Chapter Summary

Katsuki just wants a break and Aizawa puts his thinking cap on.

Chapter Notes

Hi, so this is a little later than i expected to post. Any one who follows on twitter will know that's because i chose to rewrite the entire second half :) but now it's ready and it is really long. More than double the length of the average chapter so far.

You might want a snack and a drink for this one.

Warnings for this chapter are as follows;

ANGST. Bullying, swearing, implied/referenced suicide baiting, implied suicidal ideation, canon typical violence, self deprecation.

Hope that covers it, and i hope you enjoy reading. (More notes at the end)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The buzz of confidence Katsuki had when he stepped onto the bus that morning was long gone. Washed down the drain along with his patience and will to tolerate anything.

You're gonna be a great hero...

Shinsou's words had left him floating, like he was walking on air with a fresh rush of clean adrenaline lifting him higher. Katsuki had felt more appreciated in the thirty seconds following that statement than he had the entire school year. Or ever. The little fact that someone believed he was capable, that they believed in him at all... it had been exactly what he'd needed to hear, a brief reprieve from the onslaught of negativity that was becoming all too common.

Katsuki was spurred on with a renewed vigour, he felt like he could conquer the world if given half a chance. The high thankfully lasted the entire bus ride, giving him the will to ignore the other rowdy passengers and oppressive atmosphere. Right now though, he was dying for another bout of inspiring words. From literally anyone!

It was close to maybe 5 or 6 in the evening, at least, judging by the

low angle of the sun and warmer orange tones of sky breaking through the sparse cloud cover, that's what it looked like.

Katsuki all but crawled past the thinning treeline into the vast emptiness, the outline of a building, civilisation calling him closer. The lodge they'd all be "camping" at. The Pro's that had greeted them on the overlook, the Wild, Wild Pussy Cat's (or half of them anyway) stood in the courtyard by the entrance, honestly looking bored as all hell. The blond one with crazy eyes (Pixie-Bob he recalled from Deku's over the top monologuing hours ago) was monitoring something on her H.U.D before she turned to look right at him. He resented the wide smile on her face, resented the fact that he hadn't been faster. It felt like she was gearing up to laugh at him... looking down on him for not being better.

'You should be able to clear the Forest and reach the camp in about 3 or 4 hours. Just in time for lunch! And just so you know anyone who's late won't be eating! So work together!'

The only peace he could take in this failure was that everyone else had failed too. He wasn't going to starve alone this time and that felt bizarrely satisfying to know. He would rather not starve at all but he couldn't get everything he wanted (or anything apparently). His gut growled painfully at the thought of going another day without a proper meal. He may have endured much longer without in the past, had years of training so he knew he could manage, but his plans to beat the hell out of this training camp weren't going to go well if he was busy passing out from exhaustion and slowly dying of starvation.

He braced himself when Pixie-Bob literally ran at him, "Whoop! First arrival! I call dibs on this one!" she cheered, looking him up and down before clearly trying hard to hold herself back from grabbing him. He was thankful for that restraint because the last thing he wanted right now was anyone touching him. It wasn't just because he was sore and agitated, or that he absolutely detested the idea that he might actually enjoy being embraced properly. He'd been sweating, a lot. There was definitely going to be a build-up of nitro and that was dangerous. A too quick touch might be enough to spark something. Blowing up a Hero would not go down well with Aizawa, or anyone.

Katsuki remained stoic and on guard as Pixie-Bob continued to ramble on, not really able to understand her for the speed she was going at. Not unlike Deku when he really got going, only the Pro Hero before him had a grasp on when to stop. It wasn't long before she was urging him to rest and going back to her H.U.D.

Then the other Pussy Cat looked his way. Mandalay, or Top Cat as he'd decided to call her. Katsuki was 90 percent sure she was the one in charge.

Forcing himself to stand straight under her scrutiny Katsuki returned her gaze. He didn't like the cold, judgmental look in her eye. Mandalay turned away just as quickly as she'd looked at him, making herself busy with a checklist in hand. It was hard to miss the smaller figure slouched by the entrance, glaring past the rim of a red cap, the same judgmental air pouring from him. As much as Katsuki would like say their apathy towards him left him unaffected, it would be an outright lie. Beyond the remarks from Pixie Bob there'd been no encouragement, nothing that kept him wanting to try and impress them. Not that it mattered, it was only day one and Aizawa was the only one he really had to impress. The man in question, was nowhere to be seen though. Typical.

Katsuki pondered if maybe he should try to break the awkward silence, put himself out there so to speak, and attempt to ruin whatever horrible image they had of him. Then more of Shinsou's words came to mind, along with faint buzz of what he'd felt that morning.

Just be yourself.

But the real Katsuki, the real him, who even was that?

Bakugou Katsuki was loud, abrasive and always spoke his mind... but those were the very things that got him into this mess weren't they? People hated those things about him. They weren't very Hero like either. People were always trying to train them out of him. Logic told him he'd only create more problems by being himself. But doing what the Hag wanted, being *like Izuku*, that was almost worse. If the Hag knew even half of what he did about the Nerd she wouldn't have said it... he hopes.

That just left him with one not so tiny problem. How the hell was he supposed to act?! Standing there like an idiot, doing nothing, wasn't helping anyone, wasn't harming anyone either but then making small talk wasn't exactly *him* either. Taking a deep breath Katsuki straightened further and shook off the tense feeling in his arms. He didn't want to think about it. Didn't want anything other than for this week to go smoothly and to hold his place in the Hero course.

Yeah, he didn't have to do anything other than what he usually did,

fuck being like Izuku, fuck bending to Icy Hot's will, fuck doing anything differently just to please any of those assholes. Katsuki was comfortable enough to just stand there. For now. Much longer though and he'd probably suffer the embarrassment of being carried inside... or maybe he'd be left behind in the dirt. He was so fucking tired and staying upright was becoming a challenge. He distracted himself by looking back at the vast green ocean of trees he'd spent the better part of the day traversing.

The Beast Forest, that's what the Heroes called it. It was a good fight. Long, drawn out but it was a brilliant way to start the camp.

For Katsuki the goal hadn't been about showing off or getting there fastest; despite somehow managing that. It was really all about arriving in one piece. About not screwing up, about compromising just enough to work with the others when he had to. He'd decided that if there was one thing he could do it was carry on like he had been. Ignoring the pinching feeling in his chest that never seemed to stop. Playing *nice* while everyone else took cheap shots.

The Mud Beasts conjured by Pixie-Bob's Quirk were easy to crush. It was cathartic, relaxing, he felt like he was doing something for a change. One or two of his bigger explosions and they crumbled. It was everyone else, the *Extra's*, making things difficult, being complete fucking assholes. That's what made the trek more like a waking nightmare and his plan to compromise impossible to follow through with.

Sabotage, playing dirty. It was something he wouldn't argue with or even comment on in a more controlled training environment. Had this been Gym Gamma, or Ground Beta, had they *actually* been pitted against each other, then Katsuki would have had no problem with doing anything within his power to get under their skin and win. *Winning* was the goal in those scenarios.

Not here. Not now. The goal had been get to camp but *they* had added the extra bonus objective of fucking with him at every turn.

Fucking Candy Cane bastard kept blocking him with Ice, going so far as to corner him alone with one of the Beast's early on. Round face would deliberately float debris his way and trash talk him when he happened to get close. Even Four Eyes! The fucking Class President! At one point the spectacled dickhead had run donuts around him kicking up dust, blinding and near choking him. It was when Sparky and Pinky had paired up against him that he decided he was better off

splitting from the main group entirely. Pinky had used her acid to burn through the nearest tree causing it to topple cutting off his path and Sparkplug tried (and thankfully failed) to strike him with 1 Million Volts. The sound of his stupefied yay's, weren't enough to have him smirking this time. It hurt too much to think that they were getting a kick out of physically taking out their resentment on him. And they had the nerve to call him a bully. At least he could admit what he was!

Going it alone had ultimately done him the world of good. Instead of trying to keep himself out of crossing lines of fire he could focus on 1) not getting any more injured than he already was, 2) not injuring anyone else in the process and 3) proving that he was more than capable of handling it all by himself. It was pleasant to not have to watch his back for "friendly" fire.

When it didn't look like anyone would be joining them soon Katsuki let himself sink to the dirt and took a proper long moment to breath. The breeze was barely there, not helpful at all with cooling him down. The burn in his muscles was satisfying at least, worth it, even if using his Explosions so much had only worsened the aches in his already sore limbs. If the rest of camp had him feeling like this he didn't think he cared much what the rest of 1-A got up too. They'd be too tired to bother with him.

He sat there, stewing in the summer heat, arms tired and resting over his knees as he waited for the rest of the class to show up. His stomach growled every few minutes as he let his mind reach an eery state of blank, until he was disturbed.

"I fear I'm starting to sound like a broken record here kid." Aizawa started. Katsuki looked up to him and saw disappointment spread across tired features. "This would have been a good opportunity to work on that thing called *teamwork*."

Katsuki couldn't help but roll his eyes, burying the gut deep feeling of failure as low as he could. Even when he did good it wasn't right. But this time it wasn't on him.

"Would have if I could." He muttered lowly.

Aizawa was suddenly crouching down beside him, Katsuki didn't have to look to know the Teacher was looking right at him. Watching him, closely, judging him silently. Was simply sitting here not good enough now? Should he get up and go for a run to show the man he was

serious about this. Maybe he should have just let them all leave without him. His teacher wouldn't have to waste so much time on him.

You need to stop wasting everyone's time Baby. Start working for yourself.

The Hag had told him this countless times and still he couldn't seem to meet the criteria needed to not be a waste of time. Didn't know how. Maybe if he asked...

"Sensei..." Katsuki dared, trying out civil formality, only getting an odd, confused look as his teacher hummed in acknowledgement. He glanced at his aching hands, red from the day's tasks and callused from years of being pushed past limit after limit. He'd managed so far on his own, he didn't need to bother his teacher with more of his shit. The man had enough to worry about.

"Forget it. Doesn't fucking matter. I got this." He was quick to say before Aizawa had even opened his mouth.

When Aizawa's brow rose, close to meeting his hairline, he figured he'd screwed up again. Perhaps he should have just asked but asking for the tools to get by wasn't going to get him any brownie points, not when he was trying to show the Hero just how capable he was.

The longer this day dragged on the more scrambled his head became. Right now all he wanted was to be left alone, to sleep this shitty day off so he could get on with the self-improvement. Hearing the Hero sigh Katsuki clenched his sore hands and watched as he stood.

"Like I told you before, if you want to talk I'm here." Aizawa said, giving his shoulder and light squeeze that hurt more than he'd ever admit. "Whenever you're ready."

Katsuki didn't understand how Aizawa could be so patient with him, how even after everything the Hero was still willing to wait for him to confide in him. Like it would do any good. The teacher would probably laugh at him just like his mother had. Call him pathetic since he couldn't deal with it alone. He watched his teacher join the other Pro's, pondering if telling Aizawa anything was really worth the risk.

It was another 20 long minutes before any of the rest of them appeared, shuffling like the risen dead from the forest.

With all the madness of the morning behind him Katsuki wanted nothing more than to faceplant his bed roll and sleep all the way to

morning. But of course it was never that simple.

First they had to wait for everyone to arrive, and that took all too long. Though he had to admit seeing Deku get jabbed in the crotch while he waited was mildly amusing and enough to sustain him. Adding the fact the Deku Protection Squad could do diddly squat about it made him feel even better.

Then came an impromptu tour of the building. Observation rooms, two fair sized gyms, a massive lounge area (which they'd likely not get to use), several rooms behind closed doors that were private, and finally the kitchen/dining area. Where surprisingly a mouth-watering feast was waiting for them.

Two long tables filled end to end with heaped plates of various local dishes that looked appetising enough, better than could be expected for food produced in bulk. To Katsuki though, it was nauseating. His stomach was doing flips at the mingling scents bombarding him. He was so hungry he'd gone beyond hungry, the same way he felt so tired now that he was practically wired into consciousness.

He might have been dreading the lack of food earlier but now he wanted to do anything but eat. He didn't feel remotely capable of stomaching anything.

"We know what we said earlier but you all worked so hard! And we're not that evil so dig in! You'll have to cook for yourselves for the rest of your stay though!" Mandalay told them. "And don't worry about cleaning up we've got it covered! Get washed up and go to bed, you'll be up early tomorrow!"

Katsuki sat himself in the seat nearest the exit and took small bites from the dishes closest to him; something to not arouse too much suspicion. There was tempura, pork cutlet, steamed rice, soba, udon. It all looked amazing but he felt anything more than the basics would be wasted on him. He grabbed a bowl of rice and some steamed veggies, topped it off with a little shredded nori and took a spoonful. It was like what he might imagine eating play dough to be like. The rice stuck to the roof of his mouth, tacky and bland despite the seasoning. Swallowing was like forcing shattered glass down his throat. He gulped at the cup of water by his place and decided he wouldn't rush. Hoping maybe, if he ate slow, it would give his tastebuds some time to revive.

He wasn't alone for very long before the unpredictable happened.

Apparently there was some new social norm that meant having one civil conversation with your former tormentor also meant you could freely walk up to them and share space or something. Katsuki didn't get that memo. Katsuki was not only *not* ready for that kind of familiarity, but he also didn't fucking want it. Perhaps further down the line he and the Nerd could share something that might loosely resemble what they had before it all turned sour, but not today, not for a long time. Katsuki still had so much to atone for first.

Still, Deku defied all implicit social rules and just sat down at the table, right across from him, helping himself. Katsuki could only stare stunned at the audacity as Deku piled pork cutlet onto his plate before slapping his hands together and crying "Itadakimasu!". Katsuki had been under the impression the Nerd possessed some semblance of social awareness, had seemed to hold such a skill to a level scarily higher than Katsuki himself. Clearly he was wrong about that.

"The fuck are you doing Deku?" he whisper shouted at him.

Deku paused, chopsticks in hand and met his curious stare. He completely disregarded the annoyance in Katsuki's tone instead swallowing his mouthful of rice with great effort.

"Um, eating? Try the tonkatsu it's really good, Kacchan!" Green eyes blinked up at him as if it couldn't be any more obvious and it was obvious. But that wasn't what Katsuki was getting at.

"That punch to the nuts scramble your fucking brains to mush Nerd? Why the fuck are you sitting *here*?!" he growled as quietly as he could. From the corner of his eye he could already see concerned looks drawing their way. A quick glance only confirmed his suspicion. The angry eyes staring back at him from the other end of the table told him just how much this proximity was being tolerated and that is to say not at all.

It's not my fucking fault assholes, come get your Idiot if you're so fucking worried about him!

Fucking Nerd could really learn to read the room. Heck, the rest of them should too. Deku was the one putting himself in this situation, though he supposes they think Katsuki should be the one to move. Fuck that and fuck them. If he had to spend what little energy he had left glaring them down until the sun came up he would. Though he'd prefer not to.

Turning back to Deku he glared, the Nerd seemed oblivious to the

choking tension spreading throughout the room. The air already heavy with summer heat and humidity only growing heavier in his lungs as the usual uneasiness kicked in.

The original Dekusquad, i.e. Icy Hot, Round Face, Frog Girl and Four Eyes; decided if Katsuki wasn't going to move they'd make him so uncomfortable he'd feel the need to. They all moved to sit beside them. Deku the ignorant twit he was lighting up and smiling when they did. Easy conversation surrounded him and Katsuki just tried his best to not let it get to him.

What little appetite he had was outright murdered when Icy Hot sat beside him and made awkward small talk above the day's events.

Katsuki was stuck with the rabble, taking part in a less than stellar meal. He ignored them, slowly taking bite after bite, hating every second of the feeling of it getting stuck in his throat. He felt like he was choking, suffocating despite the air around him. Then realizing this small bowl was more than he'd had to eat all week, he forced himself to eat more, indulging in the warmth of a prepared meal. A pathetic attempt at ignoring all the cold shoulders.

Some might say he was being provocative just sitting there, prolonging the agony of sitting in a crowd of people who were exuding an atmosphere of danger. But he wasn't a quitter and something this petty wasn't going to make him change.

"Kacchan?"

His eyes snapped up and he couldn't help but snap. "What?!"

It wasn't intentional, but the air around him was making him tense and he didn't know how else to show his annoyance without any of his usual outbursts. This was as relaxed as he was going to get.

Deku of course, took it in stride, either ignoring or not noticing the immediate reaction of their company. Warm, humid air carried an icy chill strong enough to make him shiver. Fucking Icy Hot was a one-trick pony, there was only so many times that would intimidate him.

"We're all heading to the Hot Springs, you want to come with us Kacchan?"

There's some small part of him that wanted to say yes. That wanted to rub it in their faces. Wanted to show them that their misconceptions couldn't be any more wrong. Even now, it was baffling that they were

still singling him out as the problem when Deku clearly couldn't just keep his fucking distance. Right in-fucking-front of them and they were still being dicks about it.

As much as Katsuki would have really loved to drive it home, to highlight the fact that Deku was propositioning him, making the offer and not being forced or coerced, he just didn't have the energy.

"As if. Piss off Nerd."

While Deku awkwardly laughed and seemed accepting of such a response, the others were acting like he'd just punched the idiot. Katsuki really couldn't take them seriously. Couldn't get over the fact they seriously believed he would still want to hurt the Nerd. Katsuki wouldn't have let himself apply to UA in the end if he hadn't come to the simple realisation that he should and could be better. Not just to Deku but everyone. Putting it into practice was a mission in itself, he'd always been quick to snap and be aggressive, learned from the Hag of course. Her extreme no bullshit attitude was hard to shake off. But the truth remained, he wasn't out to get Deku or anyone. He just wanted to learn how he could be better, so he could be the best and be a Hero. These assholes were making it more difficult than it needed to be.

What Katsuki wanted right now, was to be left alone. By Deku specifically but also every other asshole in his general vicinity too. So far the Extra's hadn't achieved much other than forcing him and the Nerd closer together with their actions. A small slither of relief, company he sorely lacked in the form of the one person who he'd rather not have the company of at all. Katsuki didn't have the words to explain it, and Deku he was more than happy to attempt to fill the empty space left by the Squad that abandoned him; even if he wasn't aware that's what he was doing.

Katsuki made a point of returning the glared daggers at Todoroki and Uraraka until they dragged the Nerd off excited by the promise of hot baths. The rest of 1-A were quick to follow, filing out after they were done. There chatter fading and soon enough he was left in peace.

Alone at last. Fucking finally!

Katsuki let himself relax in the quiet. The asshole's were gone, but they'd left a sky high pile of dishes in their wake. The mess was unsightly. Something in him twitched, restlessly at the sight. It wasn't his job, not his responsibility. Freaking Top Cat told them not to

bother with tidying up. But just the sight had his skin itching. He needed to do something. Needed to be useful.

So he did. Katsuki made himself useful.

He took his time clearing up, being tired and sore he didn't want to risk breaking anything; not here. Moving plates and bowls to the inhouse kitchen at the back of the room, he let them soak while he wiped down the tables and boxed up any left overs (there wasn't much). The place was surprisingly well organised and stocked, which made it easy to find what he needed. As he continued to wash and rinse he couldn't help silently laughing at how easily he'd fallen into the task. Just like he was at home. He hadn't cooked so the obvious role to take up was the cleaning. Even though he'd been told not to. And he hated what that meant. Even here, who knows how many miles away, the Hag was still dictating his every move.

Isn't that a good thing though? What if she heard you didn't help out, that you were a lazy shit and decided not to use the skills she taught you huh?!

It might have made sense but he refused to listen to the voice. This simple task of meticulously washing and drying dishes, taking unnecessary effort to put everything away quietly, gently, it was calming. Just like home. It wasn't what he wanted, but it really wasn't so bad. He didn't know why he was complaining. At least there wasn't a chance of striking up a fight or argument since everyone had abandoned him already. He'd get them done right and then he'd *hopefully* have the hot springs to himself. Bonus! It would be better for him that way, he wouldn't have to worry about hiding his bruises from prying eyes. They'd read into it, see just how weak he was, or maybe they'd add a few more to prove a point.

If Aizawa found out, however, he'd probably make him sit out, and then he'd lose his chance to prove his worth for good. Not to mention if he caused any more trouble for the Hag losing his spot to Mindfuck would be last concern on his list. She'd fucking kill him. Or worse.

Maybe that would be the best thing that could happen. Stop you from fucking up and tormenting everyone. You'd be a shit Hero anyway.

It was with a grim look on his face that he slammed the final plate down not so hard to break it but more than loud enough attract attention.

“Oh wow!”

Katsuki felt his heart race and his lungs seize up simultaneously. The voice wasn't overly familiar and of course someone would show up just as he was losing his temper. People were never there for the good, just the bad.

He was met with one the of the Pussy Cats... Mandalay, Top Cat. The one that told them they'd make it by lunch and that was either just a way of motivating them or a way of showing them how far they had to go. Because arriving close to his bed time was not what he called lunch time in any dimension.

Katsuki more than expected to see her scowling, angry at seeing what was probably (at least in part) her property mishandled. He was prepared for the scolding, the 'whatever' that was her form of punishment. It was easier to accept punishment when it came from other adults and not his parents. It was obvious he should behave for them, and yet, without even trying, he still made trouble.

Fuck I really am pathetic...

Instead of reprimanding him she walks up and inspects the dish he'd just finished with. Most of the rest already dried and stored away.

"I don't think these plates have ever been so clean! I can see my reflection in this one! Great job. Bakugou, right?" He nods, of course he'd know who he was, him and his infamous face. "I wasn't expecting this. Did you do them all by yourself?"

He scoffs as she looks around, probably expecting someone else to be there with him. He shoves his hands in his pockets. "Tch. It's just some plates and shit. S'not a big deal. The mess those fuckers left... uh... I mean the extras, no... fuck... crap... uh..."

He fumbled over every swear like a toddler trying to walk. She regarded him with an amused look. No judgment like earlier, no criticism, but something strong enough that he felt like he should say something else.

"Like I said, not a big deal. So, I'm gonna go."

"Thank you Bakugou. And please, just watch the language around Kota-kun."

"Kota?"

"My Nephew."

He stared back questioningly, was he supposed to know who that was. She laughed and it didn't sound incredulous for once.

"The kid that punched that green-haired boy."

"Ah, the Nut Crusher." He was instantly regretting the use of a nickname out loud, that is until she laughed again, it seemed... sincere.

"Nut Crusher? Hmm, I'll have to tell him that."

Katsuki took that as his cue to leave. He bowed and quickly picked up the pace in a hurry to get away.

"Be sure to get washed and rest up. There's more fun planned for tomorrow."

Tch. Fun? He didn't train for fun, he trained to get better and stay the strongest. Still the thought that tomorrow would be just as challenging left him feeling elated.

His walk to baths involved constantly fighting off that voice in his head. It was becoming more and more relentless in its endeavour to remind him of what everyone else thinks. Just like the Hag. What was once a source of peace that helped him reason with and ignore the harsh words, now only served to reinforce how fucking right they were. Maybe once he got washed up and then got some decent sleep it would stop... yeah, that would probably sort it.

The fuck are you even bothering for! You're a piece of shit, just go to bed already! It's not like-

SHUT UP!

No. You're clearly fucked whatever way this goes, Aizawa's on to your weak ass! Just give up already! Train hard...? Have fun...? You're fucking incapable of breathing without fucking something up for someone!

SHUT UP AND FUCK OFF, I'M KICKING THEIR ASSES AND GOING TO BE THE FUCKING BEST!

As if! The only thing you're going to accomplish is pissing everyone off! The Hag won't be impressed, she'll lock you away again! Maybe forever this time, I fucking bet you!

He groaned angrily moving down the hall. He was more than done with the stupid voice in his head reminding him he was screwed every ten seconds. He came here to train and get away from all the shit the Hag says, not to replay it all in his own head! And yet here he was, listening to a voice too much like his own doing just that.

Katsuki buried it under all the other shit he had to deal with and just prayed that the rest of 1-A was already done and in bed.

The hot springs were completely vacant as he quietly pushed open the door and made his way in. Thank fuck. Suddenly paying the price of enduring that short social interaction didn't seem so steep, especially if it meant he could bathe in peace. The idea of anyone else being there made him feel sick. Still, he knew he shouldn't get too comfortable being alone, needed to keep his guard up regardless of where he was. Getting caught and having to explain himself to anyone, especially Deku or Aizawa, nuh uh, not happening.

He winced a few times taking his shirt off. He couldn't help it, he felt like he was walking bruise! Where the Hag had held him that morning was marred with a fresh, blackening bruise; small red crescents where her nails had broken the skin. Any wonder his shoulders were fairing the worst. They had been mostly healed the day before, but now Katsuki was worried they might just fall off. An already strained shoulder didn't really appreciate taking the impact of explosion after explosion.

The renewed purple and blue flourishes, edged red with irritation, crept down his body. Familiar looking blooms across his ribs and hips. He wasn't sure exactly what had caused each of them. The beating from his parents obviously, but maybe it was his own struggling in the closet too? Whatever the cause, they all mocked him equally as he stripped. He was thankful he couldn't see his back, thankful he couldn't see what damage the belt had left this time.

He showered himself of the day's grime, wrapped a towel around his waist before he walked around the springs and stepped in.

The sigh he let out as the heat seeped into his muscles was borderline lude and embarrassing. Yet another reason he was happy to be on his own. The aches dulled exponentially with every passing second he

spent soaking in the warmth. He didn't plan on sitting for too long, not with the steam making his eyelids all the more heavy, could do without the added embarrassment of passing out naked in a bath. Besides he needed to get to bed, rest up and be prepared for tomorrow. He wouldn't have this luxury every night, not with the extra classes and the impending arrival of 1-B. He was going to have his work cut out for him. Not like it wasn't already.

But it was so damn comforting. The hot water lapping at his skin so softly it was more like a heated blanket than a bath. Like a hug, or how he remembered a hug feeling.

Fuck he needed some proper sleep.

Katsuki let out a slow, steady breath, relaxing like he hadn't relaxed in ages; rubbing gently at the tense muscles in his palms and forearms. The rite of passage through the forest had been hard going but apart from the muscle fatigue, a few scrapes on his knees from a few hard landings he was injury free. Only the bruises he'd had that morning were obvious. Already on the way to healing, a yellow tinge already obvious, still sensitive to the touch though. They'd be gone before the end of camp at least. Maybe this time he'd do well enough to avoid getting any new ones.

Getting out shouldn't have been as hard as it was. Harder than he'll ever admit and if he'd had company he'd have stayed put until he passed out from heat stroke. But when he did finally succeed, he took his time getting back to the changing room, sitting down to towel himself dry with delicate brushes to avoid agitating his injuries any more than they already were.

He had just pulled his sweatpants up, loosely tying them off and was about to put his baggiest t-shirt on, when the door suddenly burst open.

"Gah! Sorry! I think I left my... phone..."

Katsuki turned wide eyed but standing firm in his place by the bench. Kirishima stared back at him, eyes equally bugged out, mouth agape, frozen in place, the door swinging shut behind him.

"Holy shit dude! What the hell happened to you?"

The initial shock wore off quickly and Katsuki rolled his eyes, huffing as he turned back to his task.

Who the fuck is he calling 'Dude'?! Huh?! The fucking fucker fuck!

It took a lot out of him to bite back the wince itching to escape him as he pulled his t-shirt over his head. He'd only brought ones with longer sleeves, intent on covering up the evidence of his incompetence, there was still that new one around his collarbone peeking through.

"That wasn't from earlier was it?!" Kirishima inquired walking right up to him, what he *actually* came here for completely forgotten. Kirishima's own hands were scraped and a little red from all the fighting earlier. They hovered afraid to touch. As he should be.

"Fuck off!" Katsuki was quick to snap.

Just get your fucking phone and go already! Leave me alone!

"Are you okay though, bro?" Kirishima's beaming red puppy eyes locked with his, glistening with a concerned wetness that had no right being there.

Katsuki felt his chest tighten at the sight. He had told himself he wouldn't say or do anything, that he was going to ignore them as they'd been ignoring him. After nearly making a fool of himself that morning, rushing to aid his ex-friend who wasn't even in danger, he had chosen to maintain the distance they'd set. And yet that simple question, coupled with a look that seemed so genuine, so fucking sincere, it sent him over the metaphorical edge. It was a struggle to act like he hated the guy. Hating Kirishima Eijirou was impossible. And yet Katsuki felt like it was the only option open to him. He couldn't leave himself vulnerable again.

The fuck is this asshole doing?! Acting like we're still friends! Calling me fucking 'Bro'! The fuck?! People are so goddamn confusing! Like hell I'm falling for this shit! It's clearly a trick.

Kirishima hovered, waiting impatiently for an answer. Teetering on the balls of his bare feet as if he was gearing up to punch whatever had caused this. Ready to be his unbreakable horse once again. A joke if he'd ever heard one. Kirishima had left him so easily that day in the cafeteria, easily ignored his attempts at resolution after the fact. He'd once thought of this hyperactive redhead as a friend but it was all too clear how wrong that was. He'd only teamed up with Katsuki after he found out Todoroki was fully booked. If that didn't scream second choice what did?

Never anyone's first choice, because you're never going to be good enough!

That familiar numbing hollowness rushes back to him, his muscles tensing up causing the dreaded ache to build in his muscles again. That voice, his own thoughts, life in general... he wasn't going to catch a break was he?

"Dude, are you—"

"What the fuck is it to you?! Huh?! You fuckers don't want anything to do with me, so why the fuck can't you all just stay fucked off!" he shouted, folding the towel and gathering his things. When he turned Kirishima was looking at him taken aback.

"I... I've been meaning to talk to you. About... *it*. I think I... well, *we*, we all jumped to conclusions."

"No fucking shit. The fuck do you want now?!"

"Dude! You look like... I don't know... like you've had the crap beat out you! Right now I don't want anything other than to know you're not dying! We're Heroes in training, I have to see if you're okay or, you know, if you need help, regardless of what's going on."

Katsuki walked right past him, the urge to shove him strong but the throbbing of his shoulders warning him not to. With a scowl, he kept walking and growled low, "I don't need help. Especially not from you."

He pushed the door open, so much force behind it he was surprised it was still on its hinges and made a beeline for the stairs. It wasn't until his mind caught up with that he realised he was heading back to the dorm, where there'd be even more people who hated him. This was not the greatest move. Hopefully they'd be asleep already. If they had any sense at all (and weren't underestimating this camp) they'd already be out for the count. And if not maybe he'd be able to make quick work of ignoring them by going to sleep himself? As if. If fucking Shitty Hair was still up and about chances of either were slim to non-existent.

He felt empty knowing that, even if he had wanted the *help*, (which he didn't need anyway) Kirishima was only doing it out of a sense of duty. '*Because it's what a Hero would do*' he'd said, not in so many words, but Katsuki could read between the lines.

Shitty Hair didn't actually care, hell Katsuki didn't even care right now. The only thing keeping him going was the rooted desire not to sink any lower than he already had. He was clinging to a sheer cliff

edge with bloody, ragged fingernails and was crawling his way to the top. He wasn't going to take any handouts or let any of those Extras tell him how to do things. Especially not the assholes who'd tossed him out the second they'd had a scrap of proof that he was the bad egg all the rumours said he was.

Hearing a door swing behind him Katsuki picked up the pace.

"Bakugou! Wait!" he heard Kirishima shout, rushed steps running to catch up. "Shouldn't you at least let someone check you out? Tell Aizawa at least!"

"Piss off!"

"I'm just trying to--"

"Well don't! Just... fucking don't. Fuck off." he hissed, letting his shout whittle down to a normal volume. Stalling in the hall, his muscles throbbed, and dinner threatened to revisit him with the uneasiness this encounter had strung into him. His mind was one track, the constant mantra of, "*Keep it together*" playing like a record on loop. He had to keep reminding himself if he stepped out of line there were so many things that could (and would) happen, things worse than simply being looked down on.

"Focus on yourself, it's what the other Extras are doing."

"Bakugou, I..."

Kirishima went silent as Katsuki continued up the stairs. Katsuki wasn't even remotely surprised at how easily the Redhead gave up. Gave up just as fast when this started. He knew he shouldn't be so upset about it, he knew he wasn't worth the effort.

It was a funny time to start caring though. Just when Katsuki was starting to accept he had no one.

He strode confidently into the dorm. Some angry eyes burning into him when a no doubt glassy eyed Kirishima dawdled in seconds later. Ignoring the intentionally loud whispers about his Villainous nature, he noticed a select few already out for the count. Deku among them. Of course, they'd make sure he wasn't exposed to their true nature. They seemed to think the Nerd wasn't cut out for the harsh reality of the world, when he was probably more ready for it than them, having lived Quirkless his whole life until now.

Yeah he knows... no thanks to you.

Katsuki spied his bag, dumped in a corner, his belongings tossed into an unsightly pile beside it. The fuckers had messed with his stuff?! They'd had actually opened his bag and rummaged through his fucking stuff! Katsuki bit his tongue to keep from lashing out.

Keep it together , don't rise to the fuckers. That's what they want and you're better than that.

He was determined to make it through one day without causing a big scene.

He was almost afraid to see if they'd done anything more than simply being petty brats about it all. His tube of stabilizer cream was all the more empty and sitting in its own mess gave him his answer. How he resisted the urge to blow them all up right there and then, he'll never know. Assholes had just made his (and their) nights all the more dangerous now. So much for a good night's sleep.

As they all settled down, Katsuki set about clearing the mess they'd made and when they switched the lights off he worked even harder to keep himself as calm as possible. Keeping his breathing as steady as he could, Katsuki told himself this wouldn't be forever, it would all work out in the end. He'd fucking show them. He only just suppressed the tears building behind his eyes as he salvaged what he could. With barely enough stabilizer to last two days now he sparingly worked some into his palms and bedded down for the night.

The sound of everyone around him, shifting, snoring, simply being present, left him unable to relax. Katsuki couldn't let himself drift off, not knowing the consequences should he have a nightmare in a place like this. If he had more stabilizer to work with it'd be fine, but no, the whole fucking universe is out to get him and nothing would go his way.

The icing on the cake was fucking Tailman sleeping beside him with his fucking tail smacking him up the back of the head every now and then.

Seriously. Just fuck people.

Everyone was dead on their feet. Bad sleep schedules combined with that exhausting workout yesterday, and bodies that weren't used to functioning so early on low reserves, did not make for happy campers. Katsuki liked to think all the extra brain cells they were wasting on messing with him factored in too, helped him feel a little better about that the fact he'd barely slept at all because of them. He was dealing with the exhaustion well enough though. He was more than familiar with the feeling. It was a perpetual state of existence for him at this point. He'd learned to thrive off the challenge it brought. Though he had to say being forced into the tightest space in an already cramped room was something he could have done without.

Having to ration his stabilizing cream went about as well as he thought it would. The dark didn't help either, he couldn't keep his eyes closed for long, he had to make sure he wasn't in that fucking closet letting off streams of smoke. The trickle of light from under the door wasn't nearly enough to keep him calm, and the threat of nightmares bringing on unwarranted explosions was plenty to keep him up. Nevermind the fucker next to him. Fucking Tailman not keeping his fucking tail to himself. Katsuki swears the fucker was awake and whipping the damn thing about on purpose. It was a miracle he'd gotten any sleep at all.

While everyone was groaning and yawning, complaining to each other about being up at the crack of dawn, Katsuki stood tall and apart from the rest in silence, eagerly awaiting instruction. This was his chance to prove to his Sensei just how hard he was trying by trying all the harder.

He would act like the last two weeks hadn't happened at all. The bruises and the pain they brought were nothing but encouragement to do better. Aizawa had to see he really was working hard, that he wasn't wasting his precious time like he felt he was, like how the Hag said he always did. He was going to ignore any and all provocation that came his way. He'd work with whoever he had to if it meant he had even the smallest iota of a chance at keeping his hard earned place. So long as he kept focused on the goal nothing else mattered. Nothing else had ever mattered. He would succeed in every little thing asked of him. Today, tomorrow, until he reached the end goal.

He'd be himself while not being himself... somehow. He'd never been the best at compromise, had always done his own thing regardless of how others thought. But just this once, just for a while he'd give it a

real hard try. He'd be the fucking best he decided. That's what he'll do, even if it kills him.

That's how Katsuki found himself dunking his arms to the elbow in and out of a barrel of boiling water blasting off the biggest explosions he could muster. Training his pores to produce and withstand more with less effort and backlash... or Aizawa had said so. He supposed it should work in theory and the only way to find out was to try. He hoped his Sensei had at the very least taken the information in that essay seriously when planning this. This would either work like a dream or irreparably fuck his shoulders, the bigger the blast the bigger the kickback after all.

Aizawa had told them they'd feel like dying during this camp, and while he was very much already at that point he wasn't about to give in. He'd dealt with worse things than a little muscle ache.

And then 1-B was thrown into the mix. That Copycat asshole, whatever his name was, yammering on about how much it looked like 1-A were struggling even though he'd been suffering with them. Upside was none of 1-B seemed like they were actively out to get him. Didn't even appear to know anything was up. They did give him some curious looks but that was nothing new. Katsuki just kept at it. Ignored the pain, pushing through the fog in his mind telling to give up. Telling him it wasn't possible for him to show any improvement, because he sure as hell hadn't shown any since the school year began going by that stupid fucking ball throw test. Barely a few extra measly metres of improvement. Fucking hell, maybe he really was slacking.

After several hours, his hands were shaking but he wouldn't let up, not even when they'd been called for a break. His arms were aching, his shoulders felt like they were about to break. But he just kept pushing, kept his head down, continued burning through the day. All in the efforts to make himself better.

It was only when he raised his arms, waiting for what would have been his biggest explosion yet, and nothing happened that he even let himself think about anything else.

It wasn't hard to find the sleep-deprived teacher, his hair floating, shadowed eyes trained on him with their red glow. His teacher doesn't need to beckon him, the order is apparent in the way his Sensei holds his gaze before walking off with purpose. Katsuki decides to follow without argument. He needs to show his Sensei he's more than capable of being reasonable, of listening to his direction. He can't

afford the subtlety of leaving that change to happen over time anymore.

They end up in a more secluded area of the training grounds, closer to the main lodge, but far enough from people to be private. It doesn't give Katsuki anything but bad vibes.

"You're not going to make me blow up more of those mud monsters are you? They were way too easy." Katsuki scoffs, attempting to make light of the serious air exuding from his Teacher. Katsuki had always seen Eraserhead as an inspiring figure and a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield but intimidating too. The Hero just stares at him eyes searching, looking for something. Katsuki tries not to shift too much under the daunting gaze.

He's going to kick you out right now! He can see you're a waste of time and effort, bow out before he makes an example of you.

Though his attempt to silence the voice is successful, Katsuki doesn't feel any better. It's probably the truth.

At his teachers silence he stared back, keeping his face a mask of indifference. He flexed his sweaty hands, and rolled his shoulders feeling how tense they were, how *overworked* they were. The burn up his arms was more than just a result of the scalding water, he was pushing his Quirk to its limit and beyond. Plus Ultra, right?

What more could his teacher want from him? Should he start breaking bones like Deku?!

"You're working hard." Aizawa starts, his voice plain, not betraying any underlying intentions.

Katsuki preened at the swell of accomplishment rising with the sound of praise; something he'd desired to hear for what felt like a lifetime. He lets himself crack a coy grin, feeling every bit lighter for the small act of having his efforts acknowledged.

The work is paying off. Fuck yes! Take that Hag! Take that Extra's! Just gotta keep this up.

"However...", the surge vanished and anxiety rushed to claim the canyon left in its wake. "...you should take a break, let yourself breathe."

"Tch. Sensei, I-"

“Especially if you’re hurt.” Aizawa finishes bluntly. The man crosses his arms and gives him a knowing look. Katsuki feels his eye twitch at the insinuation, resisting the urge to make sure his freshest bruise is hidden.

“I’m not fucking hurt.”

“If that’s true then you won’t mind letting someone take a look at you. It’s not Recovery Girl, but the Pussy Cat’s have a decent infirmary here.”

Katsuki knows why he’s asking, his mind supplies him with the logical reasoning behind such a request, his teacher is just looking out for his wellbeing. Right now, during the camp, Katsuki is Eraser’s responsibility. He knows this, but in the moment, denying it is all he wants to do. So he does just that.

“Hah? I don’t know what you’re talking about. And no one is fucking having a look at me. I’m *fine*.”

Aizawa just continued to stare, his tired expression unchanged, “Bakugou, I’m being serious.”

“So am I, Sensei.” He retorts, curtailing the heat in his voice in lieu of something more agreeable (he hopes).

The Hero takes a breath, sighing out loud. “I’ll take your adamant refusal as confirmation then.”

Katsuki wants to scream because he knows who’s responsible for his Sensei knowing anything at all.

Fucking Shitty Hair! Doesn’t he know how to stay out of people’s business. Butting in might be the essence of being a Hero (according to Deku) but I’m not some fucking damsel, I don’t need fucking saved!

“Tch. Whatever you were told, it’s all bullshit!”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. It’s nothing I can’t handle. Like you said, I’m working hard. If you want me to stop, then tough fucking luck. I’m here to train like everyone else. And like those extras I need to get stronger. The school motto is literally Plus Ultra! You can’t expect me not to give this my all!”

Aizawa keeps dark eyes pinned on him. Katsuki makes sure to glare right back toeing the line of how abrasive he can be. Yet again the Hero is sighing.

“Nothing you can’t handle, hm? So there is something?” Katsuki hates how this is going. “Getting stronger isn’t all this camp is about, Bakugo. Remember what I said about teamwork and understanding your peers? What you need is to work with them and grow together. Don’t isolate yourself. And if you’re having problems then you need to talk to someone. If not me then someone you trust.”

Katsuki huffed. Yeah he remembered. Think about *them* and what *they* want. *They* wanted *him* gone and that wasn’t going to happen, so fuck them. He hadn’t decided to isolate himself, he hadn’t been given a fucking say in the matter. And *trust*, don’t even get him started on fucking trust.

“Why won’t you let them help you?”

“BECAUSE THEY DON’T *FUCKING* CARE!”

It was out before he could stop himself. Aizawa simply took it in stride, allowing him to catch his breath. He had to backtrack and fast, the longer he let this hang in the air the more questions his teacher would have time to come up with.

“Fuck... I mean, it’s none of their business and I don’t need their fucking help! Or help from anyone. I said I’m fine, why won’t you just fucking listen... why does nobody fucking listen?”

When he finished his clenched fists were smouldering. He was glaring at the ground feeling somewhat thankful his teacher had led them far from the others. If any of them had seen that...

There was a long stretch of quiet. The sound of shouting and the commotion of 39 other students getting on with their training, in the distance. Aizawa broke the silence with yet another sigh, no doubt questioning Katsuki’s capability and like everyone else finding him lacking and worthless. Katsuki can’t help but feel guilty. Guilty for wasting this Hero’s time, guilty for not being what his teacher needs him to be. For not being capable or perfect or remotely Hero-like. For not meeting expectations that should be easy to meet. He blasts off a few residual sparks from his clammy hands, turning away to blink off the wetness building up in his eyes.

“Alright.” The Pro started. Katsuki braced for the worst. “I apologise

for pushing. I trust you to know your limits.”

And that threw him for a loop. Since when did people go around apologising to *him*?!

“Huh?”

“I read your Quirk essay. Several times. You have surprising self-awareness. Especially when it comes to your Quirk. I underestimated you in that regard, and I’m sorry for that. Your Quirk has more than its fair share of drawbacks.”

Katsuki cringed a little at hearing such a soft tone. He couldn’t decide whether he was annoyed that the teacher didn’t expect that of him, or happy that the man was impressed with his observations. He chose to focus on the positive. Fucking finally, someone was getting it. Sensei wasn’t questioning it, wasn’t demanding to know why he hadn’t figured out how to overcome these drawbacks. Katsuki’s starting to think he should have told the man sooner.

“Tch. Don’t spread it, Teach. Can’t have everyone knowing that shit.”

Aizawa nodded, though Katsuki had a feeling the man was itching to keep asking questions. Katsuki felt like maybe he’d been too quick to assume the man was giving up on him. Eraserhead had just been doing his job at the end of the day and Katsuki wasn’t his only student. Dividing his limited time among them all was bound to be difficult.

And with an asshole like Todoroki feeding him lies and manipulating the story it made sense he’d jump to conclusions. Katsuki himself hadn’t been very forthcoming, or willing, to explain things. Now though, his Teacher wasn’t exactly reconsidering but trying to look at things from a new perspective.

“So, if you don’t mind me asking...”

“I do mind.”

“One question? And then you can go back to your exercises.”

Katsuki couldn’t believe this, did he actually had a choice here? If he said no would his Sensei just let him get on with it? Did he dare to try? Aizawa must have taken his stunned quiet as the go ahead because the next thing Katsuki knew the man was talking again.

“In your essay you mention ‘build-up’.” Katsuki frowns already having an idea where this was going, if this Sleepy Caterpillar mentions Icy Hot he’s out. “You also mentioned high-stress situations increasing this ‘build-up’. The altercation with Todoroki... was that the result of such a ‘build-up’?”

And he’s out. Katsuki didn’t think his Sensei would go the long way around to get him talking about this, but the guy was persistent.

“Does it fucking matter? It happened over a week ago. Like I told you before, I tried to get away and... they stopped me.”

“They?”

“I don’t fucking remember *who*! And what the hell happened to *one* question? Huh? You could have asked at the time, you know, when it mattered...”

His Sensei grimaces. It’s subtle, nothing more than a slight furrow in his brow, but it’s clear to Katsuki that the man didn’t appreciate that. *Shit*, he shouldn’t have said that. It was so thoughtless. Not that anything about Katsuki screamed anything otherwise. Saying something like that to a teacher too... fuck his subconscious was definitely out to ruin him. Where had his brain to mouth filter gone?! This wasn’t even his Sensei’s fault, Katsuki had told him nothing! He may have the intention of wanting the Hero to keep him in the class but it seemed like all he was capable of was giving the man more reasons to dump his ass with the rest of the trash.

You’d fucking deserve it anyway! If you disappeared no one would notice, let alone fucking care! Save the Pro the trouble and do it for him!

He shakes his head to get rid of the invading thoughts. *Fuck off*, he thinks. Whether it’s true or not doesn’t matter. It’s not important. He still had the rest of camp to make up for this.

“Can I go now?” he asks, breaking the awkward silence and trying with all his might to look as calm and collected as anyone who was all-put-together might look. He really wants this to work out so playing the long game is all he’s got.

“One more thing. Your injuries?” Aizawa asks, catching his gaze. Katsuki rolls his eyes. “Where did they come from?”

“Training yesterday.” Katsuki gritted out too fast.

If Aizawa's eyes narrowed anymore they'd be closed completely. "I would have thought that too, but Pixie-Bob was monitoring the whole time. You didn't get hit once, made near artful displays of working around your classmates before you pulled ahead. Which could only mean you had them before we arrived."

Katsuki glares. Aizawa might mean well, and he may have a point, but there was a limit to the amount of pushing Katsuki could take in a day. He was already past his limit before he even got up.

He never thought he'd be questioned this much, had never anticipated anyone would find out in the first place and hadn't expected them to care if they did. He had no white lies prepared for this situation. None of his usual excuses would work now anyway. He just didn't have an excuse anymore, if people weren't busy not giving a shit, they were busy assuming he was the one picking fights.

"Bakugou?"

"I told you. I was training. What more do you want from me?!"

"With someone or alone?"

"The fuck is this? 20 Questions?! Why the fuck does this matter?! I was training and I slipped up a few times. My Quirk is literally to make explosions! I'm bound to get a little hurt trying new things." He shouts. He can't help himself, he feels like the man is looking for a very specific answer. The fact that Katsuki can't figure it out scares him.

"Hmm, and it has *nothing* to do with Todoroki?"

"No. What makes you think the Candy Cane has anything to do with it? He-"

The smoke rising from his palms is only suppressed by his tightened fists. He's waiting for the moment Aizawa takes his Quirk but it never comes. This new level of trust is unfamiliar. And still he can't bring himself to say anything.

"I'm not going to think less of you. No one will. If... *someone* is making things difficult for you, you don't need to keep it to yourself."

As if anything would happen if I did tell you. You'd probably just laugh at how pathetic I am.

Katsuki doubled down on his glare before looking up at the cloudy blue sky above. He'd give anything to just blast up there and fly away. Anything to just be left alone, in peace, where no one wanted anything from him. Too long must have passed, because soon Aizawa was moving, sighing, clearly exasperated.

"Very well. Back to training. Don't push yourself too much. I don't want you burning yourself out before the week's properly begun."

There it was again. That reassuring tone, fuelling words telling him to not worry himself ragged. First Mindfuck with his *you don't need to try so hard*, and now Aizawa with his *don't push yourself*. He wanted to listen, wanted to believe they meant well, but the nagging voice in his head told him otherwise. They wanted him to slack off, wanted him to let his guard down. They needed him weak and vulnerable. If he let them have their way he was thoroughly fucked. The Hag's want and warnings were forefront and somehow more important to him. He couldn't let her down, he couldn't stop for anything. They could shove their *good intentions* up their asses for all he cared right now. He wasn't going to fall for those tricks again.

Still the usual coldness in his Sensei's tired eyes makes way for a warm sincerity that Katsuki doesn't know how to deal with. And since he can't he won't.

With a final nod towards the Pro, he falls into a brisk jog. And no he's not running. He's just eager to get back to work. Eager to prove himself. Aizawa-sensei had clearly taken the time to think about the things he'd included in that essay. Clearly had an idea or two on how he might be able to guide him. Even seemed to have somehow stumbled upon the art of knowing when to back off. Though ultimately his teacher needed to work on that. He was *too* adamant on getting him to talk. He might say it's for Katsuki's own good but he has an inkling there's some other underlying reason, one he can't quite see.

His palms were smoking even worse now. Fuck, he needed to blow something up or go for a run or fucking both! Something to get the painful building knot of energy in his chest out. He clutched at his shirt that clung sweaty to his chest struggling to breath. The feeling like he'd totally and royally fucked himself with that conversation already festering. He thought, that Aizawa... that he... that if he saw how hard he was working and trying that he'd lay off with that kind of shit. Not that'd he'd keep asking and pushing. Katsuki didn't need help! He could handle the Extras and their petty grudges. He was

capable, he was coping.

And yet Aizawa wanted him to seek help. Did he really look that fucking weak?

And what did the Hero think Katsuki confiding in him would do? What would that achieve? Fucking nothing, that's what! It would amount to fuck all. Telling anyone anything only ever got him in more shit, or laughed at, and he'd had enough of both already.

He felt sick, gulping in breath after breath and still getting no air. Aizawa may as well have just told him to quit, he thinks. But this was Aizawa, his teacher, a bloody Pro-Hero. Maybe... just maybe it was reverse psychology, and he was just trying to psyche him up to do better and work even harder?

Yeah, right. Even wishful thinking couldn't in a million years get him to believe that. Aizawa wasn't past using logical deceptions but this seemed too fucking elaborate. Like the Hag said, he wouldn't go to such extreme lengths just for him.

He slowed to a walk arriving at his training spot, slowly getting back his breath as he went, feeling lack lustre and not as enthusiastic as he was before. He was so tired, maybe giving up would be the best thing he could do now. Would certainly be the easiest. He could finally rest that way.

"Kacchan!"

He dragged his eyes to meet the Nerd not acknowledging him beyond making eye contact. Of course Deku would be on him while he was close to falling apart. The Nerd being himself though, being pushy in his own way, was grounding.

"We had a water break while you were gone, I grabbed you a bottle since I didn't know when you'd be back." he paused as Katsuki took the offering, several desperate gulps passing his lips, he hadn't realised just how dehydrated he was. "Um..."

"Spit it out already Deku. I don't have all day."

"I wanted to ask what Aizawa wanted but... I know that's not my business."

"You're damn right it's not." Katsuki scoffed and went to plunging his arms in the barrel, ignoring the pain and Deku's insistence that he rest

a little more. He'd rested enough already.

The explosion was abysmal. He took a moment to regard his own burning red palms and had to wonder why he was evening bothering. He knew Deku was still there, still watching and he couldn't muster the energy to even give a fuck.

"You want something Deku?"

The Nerd looked stunned for a second before waving his hands and stepping back. "Uh, no Kacchan, ah... keeping doing your best yeah!"

With a crazy burst of energy, Deku sprinted back to his own training. Katsuki was finally left alone again, hating how it felt. He wouldn't give up not when the Nerd was still pulling ahead, breezing through like it was nothing. If he was going to beat anyone it was fucking Deku. None of the others fucking mattered, he had to be better than Deku. Better than what the Hag wanted him to be.

He threw his hands back in the boiling tank, holding them there longer than he probably should have and removed them to set off a much bigger explosion than before. He'd keep trying and giving his all, even if it was the last thing he did, until there was nothing left.

Three days in. Camp was going well, he supposed, all things considered.

The exception, of course, would always be Deku's nosy ass but surprisingly even the Nerd seemed more chill. Despite their chat before camp, and the odd hiccup, it seemed the Nerd had reached an understanding of sorts. It was like he was suddenly aware that there was a very fine line and Katsuki didn't tolerate him crossing it. Only took him a lifetime to realize it. The Nerd seemed happy enough to toe that line and not cross it... for now. Maybe it was just the fact that Todoroki was taking up more of his time, or the extent of the training like he'd originally hoped. Everyone was exhausted and Deku had his work cut out for him with Tiger having him work at his peak potential the entire time. Katsuki supposes he was lucky to get to work on his own.

No, Deku wasn't the problem.

During the day, it was Shitty Hair and Aizawa-sensei sniffing about where they weren't wanted, annoying the shit out of him in the process. Beyond the Forest trek and that first day, everyone else had mostly left him alone, far too preoccupied with their own Quirk training (thank fuck) to have the energy left over to set him up. Didn't stop a few tenacious bastards from trying.

At night he couldn't sleep and not just because he was surrounded or trying to sleep next to an asshole with an "excitable" tail (that excuse was such bullshit). The room was just too dark and too packed to let him breath. It only added fuel to the nightmares he was trying to avoid. He might be used to fitful nights and strenuous days but it was beginning to pile up a little too high.

Camp was really not so different from the usual, with the exception of the Hag not being anywhere in sight.

It wasn't *exactly* like being at home. At home there were little reminders all over the place, it was constant. Here the air was refreshing, and with training he could go ignored for hours at a time. If it kept up this way he was pretty sure he'd be able to manage the rest of the week just fine. Though he had to admit that the exhaustion was starting to catch up with him. And the pressure to rectify what wrongs he made weren't helping his situation. He kept asking himself why he had to be this way, why he couldn't just make things easy for himself and everyone else, come clean and admit he wasn't meant for this. His stubborn nature of course wouldn't allow that, that and his even more stubborn will to be the best.

When they were called for dinner, Katsuki didn't hear it. Didn't realise just how stuck in his own head he was until that twerp of a child in the red cap showed up and made a point of being as loud as possible before disappearing up the mountain grumbling up a storm. Reminded him too much of himself in some ways.

It was nearly dark, sun not visible with the tree cover but there was still warmth in the sky that told him it wasn't too late. Time enough to get in a quick wash before supplementary class at least, maybe eat something too.

Fuck, it was great not having to worry about a curfew.

Still didn't change the fact he was so fucking tired. He was certain that at the end of the day, the second his head hit the pillow, he would be

out like a light. Didn't matter that the students nearest to him would crowd him and accidentally (or deliberately) disturb him as much as they could. It was his own mind that would wake him and then keep him awake. But tonight, man he was going to sleep, he could feel it.

His head was a mess of thoughts on how to keep this going. How he could continue to avoid raising anymore issues, with Kirishima and Aizawa always there, watching when given any chance, always trying to impose on him. Even in the introductory Extra class (that had went on into the early hours of the morning) Shitty Hair had placed himself right beside him much to the rest of the now dubbed Idiot Squad's annoyance and Katsuki's too. Asshole kept asking for his opinion on the topics, and clarification on the most simple things. Katsuki did his best to ignore him. He thought back to his initial opinion of the guy, 'like a hyperactive stalker Deku', he was starting to think he was right about that.

The extra classes Sensei set up, were more than beneficial in that learning about advanced tactics while the others slept was bound to put him a step ahead next time they did any team battles. Add to the fact everyone was pretty much asleep when they got back and he thought things couldn't turn out much better! Although spending that time surrounded by the people that probably hated him most left a sour taste in his mouth. Vlad King had quirked a brow at the peculiar tension in the room. Aizawa just carried on as normal, teaching his segment like it was nothing new.

Seeing Half and Half there with him, sat stiff and ready for lessons too, was a small victory. At least he wasn't getting off scott free, even if his true crime remained unknown. If Katsuki had enough brawn to rock the boat he'd blow the whistle on him, call him out. But he was all too aware of how thin the ice was getting. He shelved that idea. Maybe later, when he was assured he was keeping his place and had less to worry about. But for now at least he'd keep the status quo as much as he could.

All that, then up at the ass crack of dawn and training non-stop. It was Katsuki's idea of a good time, really. Even if he did feel like he was about to collapse any second. He just saw that as an added challenge, another obstacle which he should be able to overcome.

That morning they'd been rudely awoken to the announcement that they'd get participate in a 'Test of Courage' that night. The *fun* part of the training camp according to Pixie-Bob. That is for those who weren't partaking in the extra classes of course. Katsuki was alright

with that, no one that'd failed (or in his case fucked up) exactly deserved to have fun to the same degree as everyone else. Not with so much to work on and improve.

This was to be a rare day of rest, and in UA terms that meant still training but with more emphasis on the longevity of it, boosting stamina and Quirk efficiency, opposed to maximising output. A welcome reprieve for his aching shoulders. Katsuki spent the day focusing his explosions into a small part of his palm. An attempt to do exactly what was asked. Boosting stamina and efficiency, trying to get an effective force in a more concentrated blast. Hypothetically this could be used in countless scenarios; whether it's to hit a small target or knock someone out. With an attack like this he could win the fight and minimise collateral. Like all his moves it was much easier said than done. He knew it would be this way, always was when he was starting off a new "project". But after spending several hours trying and ultimately failing to strike the same spot over and over with haphazard shots, he felt no more capable or improved from before. The mounting pressure was too fucking much.

In the end he let loose, big explosion after explosion, varying the strength and size trying to get an even better grasp of quickly alternating between the two if nothing else. If he was faster he'd be better. He'd save more people, kick more Villain ass, win more fights and maybe be something like a Hero... to someone.

That was the idea.

He tried not to think about all the things that had happened recently, about Icy Hot spreading lies about something Deku had told him in confidence. Shitty Hair, the Squad, all of them turning their backs on him for some stupid past mistakes... for things he's not proud of in the least. As if they were perfect and had never wronged someone. The entire holier than thou act was infuriating, especially with the way they were treating him. They'd abandoned him and extradited him from literally everything. And somehow *he* was the fucking worst? Even though they were doing the same kind of shit he used to do?! The desire to blow up in their faces was borderline impossible to ignore and yet he managed. Because he really didn't want to disappoint his Sensei... or his parents. Especially the Hag.

Katsuki knows what he did was wrong, knows for a fact that he was is horrible and disgusting. If he came face to face with his younger self now he'd laugh at his aspiration to be a Hero while acting like that. Because like everyone was starting to believe he had always been

more Villain material than anything. But he was better now... right? He had thought so but time and time again everyone was telling him otherwise.

Your attitude sucks.

Don't talk like that or no one will like you.

You should really try harder.

You sure you're cut out to be a Hero with that personality?

There really wasn't any pleasing people unless he bent over backwards and succumbed to their every whim. He'd rather crawl into a hole and die than do that. They weren't going to stop until he either achieved his goal or gave up entirely, and it was obvious from how hard they were trying that the latter was their goal. He was aware that if he didn't manage to get a hold on this soon he was going to crack, because as stupid as they were their persistence was starting to get to him.

Resigned to the never-ending march forward Katsuki made his way back to the lodge, ensuring his head was held high. To let them all know that he was not going to crumble so easily.

No one, not even Deku or his Sensei had come for him this time. Thinking about the extras, the rest of 1-A and the moronic 1-B, it was almost expected. But the teachers... he didn't know how to cope with their sudden inattention.

Aizawa, Vlad, the freaking Pussy Cats, they were supposed to be looking out for them *all*. No exceptions. Yet here he was, close to dinner, inadvertently starving himself and they hadn't so much as said hello today. Whiplash from the fretting Aizawa-sensei had displayed just a few days ago. He couldn't ignore his mentors the same way he could ignore the assholes... they taught lessons daily, pestered him when he was acting out. There was no getting away from them unless they made a point of staying away apparently.

Sighing he shook out the stress in his shoulders, twinging at the pain still present. All these explosions probably weren't doing him any good, he really should have taken advantage of the rest day and you know, actually rested.

At the main façade he could see students busying themselves with tasks outside. Lighting fires and setting out plates. Dinner prep. They

all seemed to have cleaned themselves up too, Bakugou cursed himself for losing so much time, for getting lost in his head and not making himself useful. Their opinion, however, was the last of his worries, it was Aizawa he was concerned about. Them not calling on him to help sooner was their loss though, or he tried to tell himself at least.

“Bakugou!” he heard Kirishima shout, the call startling him but he kept the reaction buried as he walked. He needed to wash up too before he even tried to make himself useful to these bastards.

And yet he couldn’t help but react to that familiar happy tone and looked Kirishima’s way. Just like the other day when Katsuki had feared the worst for his ex-friend, he couldn’t look away.

Damn Shitty Hair had been acting friendlier and weirder since that first night, since he saw the bruises. Since Katsuki told him to stay away. Goddamn hero complexes were annoying. People just really couldn’t leave shit alone. It may seem like the heroic thing to do, and he supposed it was, but it was just starting to really piss him off. Why was he being so nice, did he genuinely feel bad about what he’d done? About not giving him a chance to talk or even gather himself before abandoning him? He wanted to give the idiot the benefit of the doubt. He really did. Perhaps he really was trying. But the flickering doubt that it was just a trick, a planned offence to get his defences down again and make him fuck up even more was lingering. While it didn’t seem like something someone who considered good things as ‘manly’ would do, he wouldn’t put it past them to start manipulating each other just to protect the damn Nerd.

“Bro! Hey! Can you chop the vegetables?”

Katsuki was about to answer him, a little civility wouldn’t hurt him. Right? Would earn him some brownie points, or some shit like that. Shitty Hair would report back to his superiors (whoever they were in this situation). But of course no one waits for anything anymore. Least of all Katsuki.

“Yeah, Bakugou, can you do something, you know since you’ve done nothing else all day!” Mina, who stood beside Kirishima, added accusingly.

Bakugou simply grunted and rolled his eyes, neither confirming nor denying the request. He walked straight past them, to the outdoor water pump, levering it a few times before thoroughly rinsing off his hands and splashing his face.

“Jeez, what a stuck-up asshole. Wouldn’t kill you to just go and do as you’re asked you know! Oh wait I forgot you’re a self-centred Douchebag!”

He sighed shaking the water off his hands. Hearing Kirishima quietly attempt to placate her.

“Wouldn’t kill me. Might kill you though.” He remarked, stalking back and lifting the knife, getting down to chopping before he said something else, something worse. Sooner he got this shit done the sooner he could go back to being a ghost. He could get away and get cleaned while they all fussed over dinner, because fucking curry was the last thing he wanted.

“Is that a threat? Are you threatening me?!” Mina exclaimed. Being the overdramatic Alien Queen she was.

He ignored her, cutting carrots with acute precision and speed. Uraraka stopped by him to watch like he was some attraction. He wanted to shoo her away but he knew by now snapping would only make him seem like more of the monster they already believed he was.

Just get this done then you can go. They don’t matter.

“What’s next? Are you going start baiting me too?!” Mina snapped after a second when he stayed quiet.

He faltered with the knife, coming close to cutting himself but dodging at the last second. He made sure to lay it down and took a deep breath before he really did something stupid. He couldn’t look at her, he didn’t trust himself not look as hurt as she probably wanted him to be.

“What the hell?” his voice barely above a whisper and he hated that he was sounding so weak in front of them all. Was she for real? “The fuck did you just say?”

The few members of 1-B present paused what they were doing, enjoying the show probably. Of course there wasn’t a single teacher in sight, fucking typical.

Mina held her ground, he could see her glaring him down, hands on hips, from the corner of his vision. “You heard me! You going to tell me to jump off the nearest cliff? Or maybe you’ll push me yourself. Maybe you’ll just take the easy way out and blow me up!”

He'd barely had a chance open his mouth when others decided to jump in.

"We probably shouldn't have let him near the knife." Frog girl noted out loud.

He could hear Hagakure whispering not so subtly to Uraraka behind him too but he was far too focused on not bursting.

Katsuki clenched his fists on the chopping board. He'd really had enough of this shit, trying not to shout back and proclaim his innocence (which was really not going to help he knew that) was getting harder to hold back. It had been building for days and his willpower was at an all-time low.

"Guys I really don't think..." of course Shitty Hair would try to stand up for him, now, after everything. Even after telling him to get lost.

"Come on Kirishima! You were told the same thing as the rest of us, you heard him admit what he did, you can't seriously be defending him right now?!" Mina all but shrieked at him.

The eery quiet was filled with nothing but the rustle of leaves and it make Katsuki's skin crawl. He had to leave...

"What are you guys talking about?" some randomer from 1-B asked. Katsuki didn't bother to look and see, not like knowing who was throwing the stones made a difference anymore.

His knuckles turned white under the tension in his fists. *Hold it together.* Simply walking away wasn't an option, he was 90% sure that if he tried to move they'd read it the wrong way. Lashing out was a no go, speaking undoubtedly worse, and all would make him appear weak. He couldn't let them see him weak.

Doing anything right now was going to get him in shit. One way or another this was going to end badly. He just had to stay calm and let it play out, they'd get bored if he didn't react. A teacher, Hero, someone would be along soon and stop this.

Like fuck that's going to work out! You should know by now that's not how this works!

"Bakugou here, is a Bully. He used to beat up and suicide bait Deku-kun and who knows how many others. We've all made a pact to stop it from happening again." Uraraka explained, that same gritty

determination in her voice that had made him see her as a worthy opponent during the Sports Festival.

Katsuki didn't know what to make of that. He couldn't decide what was worse, the fact they thought Deku wasn't his only victim or that they had some pact going on to stop him. He stood there, rigid and unable to move as his mind spat out all the obvious reasons why anyone would think that.

The Hag's right, there's something wrong with you, why else would anyone come to these conclusions?! Deku wasn't the only one, you've been name calling and screaming DIE at everyone since day one! You never learned your lesson! You're pathetic, WEAK, worthless... and everybody sees it.

Swallowing the knot in his throat his fists clench ever tighter. He can feel the small pops of explosions nipping his palms. He can taste copper in his mouth where he's biting through his tongue. Why is it no matter what he does people always think the worst?

"So the rumours are true? He's really the Beast of UA? Villain material?"

Fucking hell he was so close to snapping even though he didn't want to. Where the fuck was Deku when you needed him to interrupt someone and claim just how 'awesome' Kacchan is!

"Yeah, a Villain, see he's not even denying it-"

"It that what you fucking want me to do?!" he finally snapped. He was glaring at Mina now, his former friend who was so ready to throw him to the wolves only stared back at him, shocked written all over her face. He was sick of letting them talk shit. Sick of the lies and torment. He was so fucking tired and he just wanted it to end already. Just for one night at least. Just to let him rest a little.

"Do you want me to just blow up? To act like fucking animal and hurt you? Is that what you fuckers really want?! For me to act like a real Villain and talk like a real Villain?" he was stepping towards her now, slow even steps, fists steaming even as his nails broke the skin on his palms.

She was on edge, her familiar fighting stance ready. She wasn't the only one. Even a few from 1-B were looking ready to jump right in and hold him down given the opportunity. Even Kirishima was looking a little wary. He was pretty sure he heard someone run off at some point but he was too busy dealing with more of this shit to even

notice.

“We all know that’s what you would do anyway so why not get it over with... you’re nothing but a bully... a villain.” Mina snapped right back.

“You’re all full of fucking shit you know that. You think what you’re doing makes you better than I was? Guess what... it makes you just as fucking bad. In fact, I’m pretty sure the fact you’ve deluded yourselves into thinking it’s Heroic makes you even worse.”

At that moment he noticed Deku and Icy Hot show up, each laden with dry wood for the fires. Katsuki spared a moment to glance their way before looking back at Mina. He sighed out a breath, deflating, anger leaving him as quickly as it came, exhaustion taking its place. What the fuck was he doing? What was this going to achieve... fucking nothing that’s what! He may as well be digging his own grave at this point. He was so done with this. So fucking tired...

“Why am I bothering... I have fuck all to prove to you assholes.” He finished.

He shoulder checked her as he walked past ignoring the disgruntled mumbling of the audience, his pace faltered as a wave of exhaustion hit him. He stumbled but caught himself, paused his advance as he realised what the fuck he’d just done. What the shit was he was thinking.

You fucking weren’t thinking dipshit! You totally gone and fucked yourself now. Wait till Aizawa hears about this, you’ll be on the next bus home!

That wasn’t remotely, not even close Heroic. Fuck, and someone had ran off, he was in such deep shit now.

“What’s going on?” the Half and Half asked, watching him closely. He and several others were blocking his way and he could feel the sweat building again on his palms. He didn’t want a repeat. As if the moron couldn’t just take a hint from the atmosphere, he could feel that bastards gaze firmly pinned on him.

He could fuck right off. Aside from the few times Deku had approached him (a record low) Katsuki hadn’t caused jack shit of problems for anyone. Kirishima moved himself in front Mina, trying to calm her. As if this wasn’t part of the plan in the first place. It might look like he was helping him but Katsuki doubts that’s the truth.

It's just because he knows you're injured, he's only doing his duty as a hero... saving and protecting the weak. Because you're the fucking weak one here.

"What happened?" Deku steps forward, reiterating Todoroki's question with more force after no one offers him an answer. The few from 1-B are stumped to silence and the Extra's present from 1-A are reluctant. Probably not sure of what lie they're going to use this time.

"Bakugou just threatened to kill me!" Ashido accused again, calming a fraction, but her voice rising an octave as she exclaimed. Katsuki could practically hear the crocodile tears.

"Doesn't he always do that?" Todoroki of all people commented, "Like when he yelled 'Die' throwing the ball yesterday?"

Katsuki was pretty certain that at this point he was hallucinating, because was that just Icy Hot, taking his side? The fuck is going on?! Did he use one explosion too many and blast himself to an alternate universe?! The fuck is happening right now?! Katsuki nearly choked on his breath as hideous red shoes break the worn dirt he's staring at.

"Threatened how?!" Deku asks, dropping the wood by their feet. It sounded like he was ready to jump Katsuki for even thinking it. But the look in the green of his eyes spoke of concern and worry and Katsuki hated it.

"I asked him to chop the vegetables and he just walked off. I didn't really hear, but he said something about killing something...? But like Todoroki said, DIE is pretty much his catchphrase..." Kirishima offered vaguely and leaving out a good bit of the details.

"What *exactly* did you say?" Icy Hot turned to him, gaze grim and threatening, veins of ice creeping up his right, flames flickering mutely on his left. Deku gave him a look that had the half and half backing up a step.

"I don't have to explain myself to you idiots." He growled out. "Pinky complained and I just told it how it was."

"Complained?" Deku pressed, edging closer.

"He wouldn't just cut the vegetables and then clean up! Like would it really kill him!"

"You want to eat dirty veg then chop them yourself! You want veg

that's not gonna kill ya, you let me wash my fucking hands!"

Katsuki saw the puzzle come together in the Nerd's eyes. Of course bloody Deku would get it just like that.

"Oh I see. Kacchan wasn't threatening you Ashido-chan."

"How was that *not* threatening me?!"

"I sweat nitro-glycerin for fucks sake!" Katsuki offered as if it answered everything. And really it did to anyone who knew anything about his Quirk and the only experts present were himself... and bloody Deku.

"And?! So what! I make acid with my hands, I don't go around spouting death threats!" Mina scoffed.

"It's toxic. Unlike your acid, the nitroglycerin in Kacchan's sweat is passive. He can't control that part of his Quirk. It's always there! If Kacchan handled food without washing his hands he could contaminate the food and then by proxy... potentially kill us if the concentration was high enough. It's unlikely it would ever get that high, but even a little could make all of us sick. It doesn't affect Kacchan the same since it's his quirk, but I imagine it would make him feel sick too if he ingested any."

"Fucking Nerd, tell them my life story while you're at it..." he mumbled, trying to walk away again, only to get cornered by the Nerd himself.

If it were anyone else, in any other place, Katsuki would congratulate him for getting it right. Scarily right actually. But that was just Deku, hyper aware and observant of everything Quirk or Hero related around him. So hyper focused he often missed the more pressing issues... like now. It may have helped explain things, but he couldn't help but feel like his privacy had been compromised with that statement. He felt exposed.

The two of them shared a look, one they'd shared many times over the years. Where Deku's eyes screamed '*let me help you*' and Katsuki's boomed adamant refusal. He walked around him and off in the direction of the lodge, he really wanted that shower right now, the sweat was dripping off him and not just his palms. Then the extra from 1-B that had ran off, was coming backing into view, Aizawa in tow. The gloomy teacher looking as grim as ever.

His breath caught in his throat, heart pumping to the point Katsuki felt he was having a heart attack. This was the end he could feel it. He needed to cool down, it wasn't a matter of wanting, he *needed* that shower. He *needed* out. He couldn't deal with this right now.

He headed for the main doors, not caring if he was running away or how it looked, ignoring when Aizawa called him and didn't look back.

For all the things that Shouta anticipated would go wrong in just the first few hours of this camp he was pleasantly surprised to find things going... smoothly. It was a word he hadn't ever associated with his current class. Between Villain attacks and the colourful personalities of his students, smooth was about the last thing that he would ever use to describe anything that happened around them. And yet here he was, encroaching on 72 hours, and this summer camp was mostly drama free.

That being said his previously existing concerns were still there. The most obvious and pressing regarding one Bakugou Katsuki.

His rising Problem child had been very quiet the past few days. Aside from the usual explosions during his training of course. He was used to hearing him shout and be loud, Shouta was not accustomed to seeing Bakugou so quiet and withdrawn. The more Shouta thought about it the more he couldn't help but think there was something else. Something he was missing. There was something itching his Hero sense and not being able to figure it out was frustrating to say the least.

That first week of summer away from UA and his classmates might have just had the desired effect of mellowing the boy out was his first thought. Though he highly doubted it could be that simple. It seemed to hold true until, once off the bus, the explosive teen was running off by himself. Shouta had known it was too much to expect the boy to change that much in such a short time and seeing how Bakugou reacted to him simply mentioning the word 'teamwork' he felt the most he could do for now was help as he had been. From a distance and impartially.

Still, Shouta couldn't help but grow even more concerned as the camp

carried on.

The most he'd heard from Bakugou in the last few days was that short conversation they'd had. A conversation Shouta was wishing he'd prepared for better. Reading and rereading the Quirk essay had enlightened him on certain things. One being that with a Quirk like Explosion came a lot of drawbacks and complications, the second being that Bakugou was acutely aware of these complications and had contingencies already in place to counter most if not all of them. The fact that Bakugou hadn't simply explained off his outburst in the classroom as a result of one of these problems spoke volumes for his character... to Shouta at least. The teen was always raging on about being strong and not weak. It was no stretch to think that admitting to these complications (even in written form) was like admitting he was weak in Bakugou's eyes. Saying it out loud might seem close to social suicide for a kid like Bakugou.

This mentality of Bakugou's just needlessly complicated things.

Thus he had learned that there were very specific things the boy liked to address and even more specific ways he liked addressing them. Which was good in theory. But Shouta was finding it difficult, near impossible, to gauge when he was pushing too far and when to back off and ultimately just ended up making his number one Problem Child close off even more. His role of keeping an eye on him became more exhausting when he opted that two would be even better. Shuzenji was right about something going on, the trouble was discerning what.

Day three, was the first slotted day of rest. A day where there should be no issues, related to training or otherwise. *Should*. It *should* have stayed quiet, but at this point he wasn't even surprised when it didn't. The problem child had spent the day continuing to push himself, the variance and less intense nature of his exercise was barely passable as rest.

Shouta had decided to give him space today. He was contemplating how much further he, Vlad and the Pussy Cats could push 40 Hero trainees before it became ethically questionable. In all honesty they were probably already very close to crossing the line, hence the day of rest. The training was rigorous and it was intended to leave them drained. Building up their Quirks was second to the development of stamina that they'd need to use said Quirks. As Pro's they weren't going to always sort things out in a matter of seconds. The combat scenarios in class were not perfect comparisons of real Hero work in

the field. His own class new that better than 1-B.

Aside from simply grinding the fear of god into them and preparing them for the Provisional Exams they were aiming to have them sit by the end of summer, this Camp was supposed to foster an environment for the development of strong bonds. Teamwork. While it had seemed virtually impossible with the nature of having to micromanage 40 different Quirks by isolating each students needs and what would benefit them, the teambuilding came in other forms. The Forest Trek was one such chance. Sharing the dorm another. Forcing them all to cook and clean for themselves too was intended to promote teamwork and it did, for all of them with the exception of Bakugou.

Shouta could see he was trying. There hadn't been a single outburst from him concerning his peers since they'd arrived. Well, none he'd been privy to. It was starting to worry him. Aizawa had never thought himself the type to ever worry so much, and for a single student too. Contrary to his advice on Teamwork Bakugou seemed to be moving the opposite direction. Every time Shouta laid eyes on him the boy was alone. Since arriving at the lodge the only exception had been dinner, but even those interactions seemed tentative, stressful almost. As if Bakugou was reacting badly to simply being in company. He knew he had to say something when Mandalay of all people, another Pro, approached him on the second day. She had come with not just compliments for Bakugou's apparently amazing domestic skills but concern.

'The second he noticed me his guard was up, as if he was expecting me to be angry with him.'

The simple sentence had a hive of worst case scenarios filling his head and a thousand more questions. Recovery Girl had broached the topic, suggested there was bullying going on. He hadn't seen anything too damning beyond the usual competitive banter. But now the idea that there was something more grim happening behind the scenes wouldn't leave him alone. Why would Bakugou react such a way to the presence of a known Hero? Did the fact Mandalay was a Hero even come into the equation? He knew he was digging down rabbit holes, encountering dead-end after dead-end. With no evidence short of Bakugou admitting something he had nothing to act on. Only vague speculation. For all he knew Mandalay had simply spooked him and Bakugou had simply reacted. Now knowing that the teenager was running on adrenaline constantly, it was more clear to him why he was always so highly strung.

Not long after chatting with Mandalay, Kirishima approached speaking of the same irate blond and how he was sporting bruises down his back and Aizawa decided he had to do something. The talk was a failure and the boy was closed tighter than a clam, showing no signs of opening up any time soon.

Shouta had no bloody idea what to do. He'd dealt with hyperactive kids, emotional kids. With shy kids and those moody emo types who just didn't really seem to care. Bakugou was a bizarre mix-up of all of them and finding the gentle balance of temperament to approach him with was proving difficult.

His mind was centred on one student when he had 39 others to worry about. He should have been planning that nights Supplementary class not organising his next steps to get Bakugou to open up.

All his plans for the day were suddenly put on hold when one Awase from class 1-B ran his way and breathlessly asked for his help.

"I don't know what started it, but Bakugou looks like he's about to murder someone! I thought it best to get you Eraserhead."

Aizawa moved with haste. From a distance it looked heated, several of his own class and 1-B watching the spectacle, the usual suspects on centre stage. His own merry band of problem children. One, two and three all there, but gazes were focused on a certain angry blonde, who didn't look so angry. In fact Shouta would say past all the apparent rage he could see there was more fear and terror in his posture. Maybe Chiyo was right about the bullying after all. Without knowing all the facts he couldn't say just yet.

"Bakugou!" Calling for him had been a mistake, it gave the boy a chance to run and run he did. Prideful Bakugou all but sprinted to the lodge kicking in the door and disappearing, a trail of smoke lagging behind him. Aizawa wanted to followed but from history knew he needed to let the kid breath first.

He turned Quirk fuelled incensed eyes to others, "Explain."

He levelled his gaze with Midoriya then Todoroki, because if history held up then these two were likely somehow involved. The accident prone student marvelled at him mildly confused before somehow realizing what his Teacher was asking. Shouta was half expecting him to point fingers at Todoroki. Listening to him struggle to formulate words and then point towards people he had thought were friendly with Bakugou did little to ease his displeasure.

Midoriya's gaze looked towards Ashido, Hagakure and lastly Kirishima before settling on the entrance to the lodge. Of course he'd want to follow Bakugou, in spite of the obvious tension between the two they were practically joined at the hip.

Shouta levelled the accused with his own glare while the teens looked anywhere but at him. He didn't have time for this, he had an angry Explosion wielding teen to check on.

"Bakugou threatened Ashido-chan!" Hagakure blurted out. Ashido was quick to agree.

"Yeah, he was prepping the carrots and then turned on me with the knife."

Shouta barely contained a sigh, this kind of behaviour was just unacceptable. Never would he have expected something like that from Bakugou. Then Kirishima piped up and he just got all the more confused.

"What? That's not what happened, like at all!" the redhead all but shouted.

The ensuing argument was enough to give anyone a headache.

"ENOUGH!"

Thankfully he was listened to and there was blissful quiet. He really wasn't getting paid enough for this.

"When I return I want a full, *calm*, explanation. Understand."

He didn't wait for an answer before following the path Bakugou took. He dug into his own teen years and tried to think of where he'd go if something like what just occurred had happened to him. *Bed*, that's exactly where he'd go, but then Bakugou wasn't the type to just lay down and take things was he?

His mind wandered back to Bakugou's Quirk essay, he could probably safely assume that could be considered a stressful situation. Which would have led to a build-up so... maybe... just maybe.

Shouta turned back on his path towards the dorm and headed to the baths instead.

He walked in, greeted by the constant hiss of running water telling

him someone was here at least. Whether it was the student he guessed remained to be seen.

There was a spreading pool of water creeping from one of the shower stalls, the curtain closed over concealing the occupant. Not wanting to cross any lines, Shouta stood nearby.

“Bakugou?”

There was no response, but somehow that only confirmed it was him.

“I really need you to tell me what happened this time.”

More silence, only the running water breaking the quiet.

“Ashido has made quite a serious accusation, if you don’t at least explain yourself I will have to take necessary steps to address this.”

Still nothing. Shouta pinched the bridge of his nose trying not to lose his patience. He needed to approach this properly, appropriately. If Bakugou didn’t say something he couldn’t do anything regardless of his own hypotheses. The last thing he wanted was to expel the kid, especially for something he didn’t do.

“If you won’t tell me I can only assume Ashido’s telling the truth, Bakugou.”

Finally he heard movement, a few steps, and... sniffing? The idea that the Bakugou Katsuki could be crying seemed ridiculous to him. He was just too prideful, too headstrong and self-assured to let the little things get to him. It was just because he was in a shower right?

Another sniff and then almost inaudibly Shouta finally gets a response, “Doesn’t fucking matter...”

Aizawa could have guessed he’d say as much, even behind the thin curtain Bakugou was trying his hardest to be the independent student he was, even when it was quite obvious he was hurting. Not knowing how to get through to him was killing Shouta, all he wanted to do was help him.

“I’m going to have to call your parents about this.”

The speed and force with which Bakugou pulled back the curtain nearly ripped it clean from the rung and was honestly quite impressive. It had Shouta on guard. Seeing his student for the first

time since he ran off, it was difficult to not just reach out and hug him, (and Shouta didn't give hugs lightly) just to assure him things were going to be okay.

He was still fully dressed, shirt and pants soaked through and clinging to him. The usual pointed spikes of soft blonde hair were flattened on his head, his red eyes rimmed red too. His lips were quivering from the cold.

“Don’t.”

Don’t...?

“Don’t call them. Whatever they said, I’ll take whatever punishment I have to just... just don’t call *her*. Please.”

Aizawa didn’t know what to think. One second the suspected bullying was all but confirmed and now his mind was reeling with a new possibility. He shouldn’t jump to conclusions, lots of children hated having their parents called for various reasons. But seeing Bakugou hiding tears behind the dampness of a shower and all but begging him to not call home, it was hard to think of anything else. The kid looked dead on his feet, like he hadn’t slept in weeks. A damn sight worse than he had just the day before. He was clearly in no state to be talking let alone confessing to something he hadn’t explicitly detailed. This could wait a little, he could get some more information from the others outside in the meantime.

“Alright, here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to clean up and go rest. No more training today. Get some sleep, eat and I’ll see you in the supplementary class. We *will* talk then. Understand?”

Bakugou refused to make eye contact as he nodded. Shouta didn’t expect much else in the way of talking right now anyway. He was hesitant to leave Bakugou alone in such a state but turning on his heel Shouta headed back outside. The sight before him was one that could convince anyone nothing had even happened. His two other problem children were gone. Ashido and the other girls laughing as if she hadn’t just had her life threatened. Kirishima, he was furiously poking at one of the fires and judging by this posture wasn’t happy about something.

Whatever was going on went deeper than petty rivalry and Aizawa needed to find out what.

Katsuki felt horrible. It wasn't the usual kind of horrible where his stomach was twisted and knotted, where his head wouldn't shut up and his palms stayed clammy with sweat. It was worse. The voice in his head was disturbingly silent, the sweat on his palms desperately held back with the last of his stabilizer. His stomach had been churning non-stop for hours to the point he felt numb and there wasn't a doubt in his mind that his organs hadn't turned to mush. Throwing up his insides didn't seem so outlandish a possibility right now. The idea that he could just get out of what was coming was so very tempting. Anything to prolong the inevitable.

He had almost, *almost*, flaked out of the supplementary class altogether. He had been so fucking stupid, running off, letting Aizawa catch him like that. He was still trying to process the fact he had literally begged his teacher, pleaded with him not to call home all while drenched and quivering like a drowned rat. He'd looked so fucking weak and he knew it. What a way to earn the Hero's trust. Add to that the fact he'd been crying, Katsuki had been silently praying for the earth to swallow him.

He couldn't be sure if his plea had even been heard. Right now it didn't really matter. If the man wasn't going to kick him out for whatever reason the others had told him he was definitely had plenty of other reasons now.

The few hours rest he got had helped, a little. It was easier to drift off with no one else around and the last of daylight coming in, but he hadn't really slept, more dozed. Still it was enough to allow him to think that little bit clearer.

Aizawa wanted to *talk*, and under the circumstances that couldn't mean anything good. His thoughts were going a mile a minute, all concluding that nothing he could say would help him hide the fact he was just as pathetic as the Hero had witnessed. Stewing in those thoughts alone probably wasn't the best idea either.

Katsuki had decided to arrive to the classroom early. Easier to avoid everyone that way. The room was empty, every tick of the second hand too fucking loud as it counted down to the unavoidable. Soon enough *they* would arrive and his fleeting quietness would end.

How could he be so fucking weak to let them get to him like that, so

easily. All the effort he put into ignoring them and carrying on was for nothing. If they could make him explode with next to no effort, with just a few words, then what was he going to do? He was fucked! For the rest of camp, for the rest of UA, for the rest of his goddamn life at this point! It was getting to be too much, their subtle digs weren't so subtle when they were announcing it to other classes like it should be common knowledge. It wouldn't be long before the entire school was on his ass. The media would have a field day with this shit too...

"Fucking hell..." Katsuki couldn't help but sigh aloud burying his head in his hands. He didn't want to think about it but he really didn't have a choice.

Things were getting out of hand, he could see that. It was going from bad to worse. Nothing he was doing was working. The only reprieve were the moments he got alone and they weren't often.

Impossible, that's what it was. For him to even stand a chance of making it another day, or to the end of the week would take nothing short of miracle. He couldn't see any way of getting around this without giving into their whims, either that or fucking up in an endless loop as he stubbornly tried to make things work. If he freaked out at school he got punished at home, he fucked up at home and well then he was just plain fucked.

He could admit it, he was struggling and badly. Never before had he had to deal with something like this, he didn't have a blueprint on how to fix it or make it go away. It wasn't easy to ignore anymore. The fact that Aizawa was potentially going to kick his ass out and send him home was just the rotten cherry on top. All he'd wanted was one week, one fucking week where nothing went wrong. Was he that terrible a person that he didn't even deserve that?! Was it too much to ask?!

He let his forehead hit the table before composing himself as best he could, prepared to keep up the façade to the very last second, unaware of the eyes already watching him.

"And I thought you looked woeful earlier."

Katsuki had to reign himself in, stop himself from jumping. Contemptuous, piercing blue eyes, a smug grin is what he saw when he looked up. Monoma Neito, 1-B's resident scumbag. Fucking Copycat looked all too happy revelling in his apparent discomfort. The thought that this asshole was there to witness everything earlier made

him even more annoyed about it. He didn't know many faces in 1-B but he knew that if anyone would rub it in it would be this fucking prick. Katsuki wasn't in the mood to talk, not to him, not to anyone. He wanted to be anywhere but here.

Turning away he opened his notebook to the pages he'd filled the night before. Hopefully this idiot would understand, maybe he'd have more than the one brain cell Deku had when it came to reading the room. Footsteps crossed the room. All the while Katsuki fixated on the words he'd written, notes on how to act in an emergency, none of them making sense as he attempted to mentally prepare himself for the rest of the night.

The table he was sitting at shook when Monoma dropped into the seat beside him.

"So is it true then? What that Peppy Pink girl said? That you bully Midoriya? I mean I always thought you were a bit of a mindless brute but you never struck me as the type to go around baiting people to kill themselves... or is that more of a hobby?"

The pencil in Katsuki's hand snapped under the pressure as he tried using the little energy he'd soaked up from that nap to keep himself calm. Monoma laughed, loud, awkward, irritating.

"I'm kidding. What happened earlier was out of line, even I know that. Are they always like that? It was like they wanted you to blow up. I'm actually surprised you didn't let off a few explosions! If it had been me, I would have shown them just who they were messing with. Hah, I do miss your Quirk, it was tough on the shoulders but the heat, the adrenaline, the power it felt good."

The cocky bastard had only used a copy of his Quirk, not the real thing. He refused to believe it was anything like it. If he had the real thing, he'd be fucked, just like Katsuki was. Monoma had no fucking clue how much work went into balancing everything. How much that balance was suffering with the stress building up.

"Touch me and I'll kill you myself." Katsuki mumbled. "You have no idea what the fuck you're talking about."

"Okay, okay, just, if you're ever going to hand their asses to them, please let me know. I very much want to be witness to that! Would love to see 1-A get taken down a peg or 6."

Katsuki stared blankly at the pages in front of him.

“Now I’m getting really worried.”

“The fuck?! Don't you ever shut up?! Why don't you just-“

“Where’s the Bakugou who was going to wipe the floor with everyone! That fire is what made messing with you so fun. What’s going on that you won’t even come back with something witty!”

“Shut the fuck up!” he shouted a little too loud to pass as a whisper.

He tried to refocus only for Monoma to place his hand over the page blocking his view and very much trying his patience.

“You got a death wish or something Copycat?”

“That fact that you aren’t arguing with any of what I just said is truly alarming.”

Katsuki looked up but not at him, stared blankly at the wall. Copycat hummed beside him, fingers drumming on the table.

“You’re no fun when you’re like this...”

“Like fucking what dipshit?!” Katsuki turned to glare at him, not hesitating to shout, that of course just had to be when Vlad King entered the room, striding confidently in all his Hero costumed glory, to the desk at the front, scolding him as he went.

“Eraserhead might let you speak so crudely but you will not speak that way when I am teaching, understand Bakugou?”

It might have been a question but it was clearly an order. Katsuki nodded with a huff and Vlad carried on setting up for the class. Monoma turned to look at him with questioning eyes and a sceptical look. Copycat had his lips parting just about to speak when the door opened again. Aizawa entered, sparing him a glance that was unreadable before moving to discuss something with Vlad. The others walked in behind him. Pinky glaring straight at him, Sparkplug and Tapearms matching her glare. Kirishima looked like a kicked puppy and Sato appeared to have no care in the world.

The most confusing was Todoroki, seeing him enter bearing an expression of total displeasure. It was the most emotion Katsuki had ever seen on his face... aside from anger. It was like night and day compared to how unassuming he was earlier. Really looked like Deku was the only reason he’d shown any concern, trying to stay in the

Nerd's good graces. Fucker really was a good actor. That left him wondering what exactly he was being accused of. Katsuki knew that with Ashido involved they'd likely drive home the *threatened to kill me* story but whether they'd change the details was another question. Would they dare to do that when Deku was witness to some of it? When others from 1-B were witnesses too.

“Bakugou.”

Aizawa called him from the doorway and Katsuki struggled to make himself stand, he really wasn't ready for this, not ready to hear all the harsh exaggerated details of his outburst. Not ready to give all this up. They left the room and headed further down the hall and into a smaller room, an office space. It was uncomfortably too much like the last time they'd spoken at UA. A small office, a desk in the corner, one wall lined top to bottom with books, a hideous grey couch in the middle of it all.

Aizawa told him to take a seat on the couch before he closed the door behind them and took a seat himself. Thankfully not too close, Katsuki already felt like he was suffocating enough.

They sat in silence for a few minutes, and the longer it went on the more uneasy Katsuki felt. The last of his stabilizer was slowly being rendered useless as his palms grew sweaty. He'd used every last drop to avoid anything going tits up for him so it should hold a good while.

“So.” Aizawa started, making Katsuki jump. It had been so quiet and then (without so much as sighing) the man had spoken. Who wouldn't be startled by that?

Literally anyone else.

He frowned listening to the voice that had been so quiet until now. It was racing ahead, telling him what his teacher was going to say. About how disappointing he was, how useless he was... how villainous he was.

“We have all night Bakugou, but I cannot stress how important it is that you talk to me this time. Ashido has made some serious accusations and while there are several confirming her story... I don't believe that's all there is to this.”

Katsuki waited for the punchline, for his teacher to turn around as say *haha, just kidding*. He knew the man wasn't the type to do that, knew that his teacher's sense of humour was more on the darker side from

past experience. He didn't dare look up, didn't want to see pity in place of the usual disappointment, neither were desirable.

"What did she say I did?" he asked, morbid curiosity not letting him stay ignorant any longer.

His teacher shifted in the seat beside him, "She claims you threatened to kill her, then proceeded to terrorize her with a knife. That you attempted to attack her and several others when they tried to intervene... but that's not true is it?"

Shaking his head was all he could do to answer his teacher. The Hero hummed, shifting beside him again.

"I need you to tell me what happened. Even if it takes all night. Take your time, we don't have to rush this."

Was this really happening? Was his teacher giving him the benefit of the doubt, or was he just looking down on him? Katsuki wasn't entirely sure he wanted this man, whom he looked up to, to know why he'd shouted like he did, didn't want him to know just why everyone was gunning for him. The thought that he was just going to be laughed at again wouldn't leave him alone. Minutes passed. Katsuki couldn't bring himself to explain himself, but he didn't want to lie either; the others were lying enough to his Sensei already, and he was better than that. Still, he couldn't say the words that would save him this time. He didn't think he deserved it.

"Bakugou, I just want the truth about what happened *today*. Whether this has any bearing on what's happened previously doesn't matter right now. Okay? Just today."

He looked up and saw the black of his teacher's eyes for the first time in a while. He couldn't hold the gaze for long before staring at the capture weapon around the Hero's neck instead. For once he was thankful for his Sensei's calm composure, it was soothing enough that he could blink back the wetness building in his eyes with ease.

"I didn't threaten or attack anyone."

"So what happened?"

A shiver down his spine stalled him, a chime in his head and then Mandalay speaking. Aizawa seemed to be experiencing it too if the frown on his face was anything to go by. Her Quirk was the most invasive thing ever and with the voices already in his head he would

rather do without something else butting its way in.

We are being attacked! Two villains, currently unidentified, but we suspect more, anyone able should head back to the lodge! Do not engage! I repeat do not fight! Get to safety!

Aizawa was up in a flash and heading out of the room. Katsuki moved with him, fuelled by the urgency of the situation, power walking into a run with the man back to the classroom. Only the Hero didn't stop.

"Stay with Vlad, I'll go help the others."

"What? We can help too?!" Katsuki snapped back just as fast, his uneasiness draining off him in the rising anticipation of a fight.

Aizawa didn't answer and didn't stop running. Then was out of sight. It was Vlad King that answered him.

"No, you need to stay here where its safe and I can protect you."

Funnily enough it was Monoma siding with him.

"But Vlad-sensei, wouldn't this be a good opportunity for us trainees to put what we've learned into practice?"

Vlad glared at his student, and then Kirishima when he agreed also.

"Yeah, Sensei. My friends are out there, I can't just sit here and do nothing when they need help!"

"Enough! We don't know the full extent of the situation. You are safe here and will stay here." Vlad finished.

Tch. To sit in the ignorance of believing villains wouldn't hesitate to come in here was stupid.

Katsuki didn't get a chance to argue back when there was a loud crack from outside. Blue flames funnelled up the hall, stopping just short of the where they were and in a split second Katsuki was running. His didn't doubt his Sensei's ability handle himself but he couldn't just sit back and do nothing. Not like last time. Not like at the USJ. People got hurt that day, because he wasn't good enough, or fast enough. The Hag had made sure he knew that. He couldn't sit idly while he same could potentially happened to his Sensei again.

Katsuki had been itching to get moving the second Mandalay's message came in and even with the others shouting behind him he

didn't stop. The sound of pursuing steps only made him move faster. The universe might hate him but this could be his very last chance.

His ability to kick doors open came in really handy as he burst outside and into the courtyard. There he saw his Sensei, with a burnt ass villain bound in his capture scarf beneath him. His Sensei's hair floating and cancelling out the Villain's Quirk. Icy Blue eyes, strangely familiar, met his and Katsuki felt like maybe, he should have stayed inside.

"Ah, that's where you're hiding." The Villain said with a smirk as he got up with effort his flesh starting to... melt? Aizawa angrily yanked on his scarf, demanding an explanation just as the Villain turned towards them only for him to dissolve entirely into mud. "See you soon."

Katsuki stood stunned as the Villain vanished. Copycat, Icy Hot and Shitty Hair, who had chased after him, were standing behind him, regarding him with equally cold and questioning looks.

"All of you back inside. Now!" Aizawa shouted, trying to usher them through the doors. Katsuki was too busy wondering what on earth the Crispy bastard meant, was he even talking to him? It was just coincidence that the guy made eye contact with him. Couldn't be anything else.

"Do you know that guy?" Kirishima demanded.

"What the fuck? No!"

"He seemed to know you." Todoroki remarked.

Katsuki didn't know what he was going to do with that assumption and it was far from important right now. Nevermind what the freak ass villain was spouting, he knew there was a fight going on out there. His idiot class mates, they might hate his guts but that wasn't going to stop him from following his gut instinct. Moronic Deku was out there too! Doing the unthinkable, being his self-sacrificing idiot self probably. Exceling while Katsuki stayed still.

Aizawa stepped beside him, the others already safe indoors again, "Get inside, Bakugou."

And Katsuki was more than ready to relent, he realised he wouldn't be all that much help with the stabilizer hindering his Quirk anyway, hadn't truly been thinking when he rushed out here in the first place.

Hadn't had a chance before his feet were moving. He was going to do as he was told just as the sound of cracking wood and toppling trees alerted them both.

Katsuki looks toward the sound, expecting to see the same Villain as before only he saw something worse. A creature not unlike the beast from the USJ clawed its way in. Pale skin. Brain exposed, a metallic headpiece framing it's face and holding it's bite open, teeth bared in a permanent sneer. With shoulders inhumanly wide and more limbs emerging from its vast bulk, wielding chainsaws.

"Nomu..." Aizawa observed, clutching on his scarf and stepping in front of Bakugou. "When it's clear you get indoors. Inform Vlad, get him to call for back up."

"You got it!" Katsuki readied himself, wiping off all he could of the nulling cream on his palms. The sparks were dismal, he wouldn't make a dent like this, but he wasn't here to fight right now, all he needed was to get inside quick.

The Nomu groaned and lumbered forward, and then it lunged. It was on them in a second, not as fast as the USJ Nomu, not by a long shot. Aizawa darted forward, capture scarf wrapping around some of its many arms and dragging it back. Katsuki ran and blasted out with all he could sending one well aimed concentrated shot towards the beast. The monster backed up when the shot connected, flesh singed from the heat of the blast but it paid no heed to any pain it might have felt, instead pulling easily out of his Sensei's hold and swiping at him forcing him back the way he'd came. It stepped forward ready to strike again. So Katsuki didn't stop there. He pressed forward. Blasting with everything he had. Not stopping even when his muscles began to ache, and still his explosions weren't all that big.

The sound of Aizawa shouting out in the background was barely audible over the noise. He just had to do one thing, get inside, tell Vlad King. He was going to use this and prove himself.

There was a flash of white and the Nomu was in front of him again. It was eerily reminiscent of the USJ, only this time he wouldn't freeze.

"Shit!" Katsuki snapped sending off another barrage of tiny explosions to redirect himself just in the nick of time. It was odd how easy this Nomu was to scare off. At the USJ even his strongest explosions had done nothing. This one, his lesser explosions were knocking it over with ease. It was like watching an overdramatic actor ragdoll on stage

as it fell back into the doorway dismantling it as it fell. It wasn't even trying to fight back. The Nomu stood up and did nothing but swing wildly in his direction. All six, chainsaw arms flailing with no real target. Broad attacks that were easily dodged, most didn't even come within striking distance.

Something was off about this.

Katsuki backed off and Aizawa leapt back in, the creature reanimating with more rage and anger, more serious attacks that came very close to meeting their target. Even the fucking villains were pitying him now, is that it? Katsuki couldn't think of any reason why a Nomu of all things would pull punches.

Regardless, he was still determined to fulfil the task set to him, so he decided the back way in would have to do and failing that a window.

He's running wide around the building, his Sensei's fight growing distant, and then blue flames hotter than anything he'd ever experienced, even hotter than Icy Hot's own fire raced across the ground in front of him climbing higher and higher, blocking his path. He could've blasted up and over any other day, but he'd already shot himself in foot on that front. Why the fuck did he feel the need to use so much Stabilizer?

He ran for the edge of the fire, his plan still to get inside one way or another. The flames just followed and before he knew it he was surrounded... and alone. Aizawa was still battling the Nomu and fuck knows what was happening elsewhere. His head was beginning to ache, the fatigue and pressure weighing on him rapidly catching up.

His head was a din of noise, voices screaming at him to move, to get the job done, other's demanding he give up because he'd only make things worse. The heat was too much. The effort, everything... it was all too much. His vision began to blur as he struggled to make a coherent thought.

Give up!

No! Shut the fuck up!

You know this is pointless, just forget about it! You can't help anyone, you're useless, pathetic!

"SHUT UP!" Katsuki screamed, pulling at his hair as he rushed the flames hoping to break through, the heat only caused the surface level

nitro on his palms to combust. Between the stabilizer and the fire, short of hand-to-hand he was defenceless.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” he had to think, he couldn’t think.

Katsuki backed up, trying to focus on something, anything. He was vaguely aware of someone approaching from the other side of the flames. A dark figure, shrouded in black and his first thought was his Sensei. Relief flooding his veins before he could stop it, and then he caught sight of Icy blue eyes as the Villain stepped through the fire unfazed.

“Bakugou Katsuki. Time to go.”

Katsuki remained quiet, his mind quietening too now that there was something to target.

Katsuki set his sights on the building behind him. He could do this, he knew he could. No one would tell him otherwise. He forced his palms to sweat more, the burn beneath his palms calming as much as it was draining.

He wasn’t going to play into a Villain’s hands. He pushed forward with the biggest blast he could, gaining some ground, hoping to fly past the Crispy bastard and race his way to the lodge. Like fuck he was going to let them take him anywhere. Or take what they wanted. No fucking way.

The sight of more flames gave him pause only long enough for him to decide he was going to kick this guy’s ass into next week.

“Now, now! Bakugou-kun. No need to fight, we just want to chat!”

“Well I don’t fuckface, piss off already!”

The Villain laughed, playing with small blue flames in his hands. Pounding steps from the way he came told that the Nomu had caught up. He was stuck, unarmed, about to pass out and then it struck him. The Nomu was behind him. A quick glance confirmed it. So where was Aizawa? Did he... did the Nomu.... Again? No... no! The rage at his own failure quickly followed the revelation and though he was on the verge of collapsing he bit his tongue and pushed forward.

Katsuki roared as he swung a right hook forward, the Villain asshole grabbing him easily and yanking him closer; the guy smelled like month old dirty socks and stale burnt sweat, a scent so intense he

couldn't help but gag.

"Nomu, distract the others." The Villain ordered. The Nomu wandered off obediently while Katsuki glared the bastard down. With the stabilizer his explosions had been lacklustre, the effort it took to produce anything more than a spark too much for him right now. But Katsuki wasn't going to go quietly.

"Get off me fucker!" he said, snatching his hand back only to get blocked again.

He focused as much strength as he could into his palms and aimed, this had to be enough to take the asshole out. He'd have nothing left after this. A burst of blue flame struck out prematurely detonating all his nitro.

It all happened so quickly from there. He wasn't sure what was happening, his exhaustion caught up to him completely as he tried to recover his position and failed. He felt cold clammy hands gripping his neck, pressing his face into the dirt with ease.

It was painful, he wrestled as much as he could but before long he was dragged along, wrestled into the cover of trees. As he fought and burst off what little he had left. It wasn't enough.

"Oi! Compress! Deal with this brat would you! The other's better hurry up. Twice make another copy and have it round up the others. We've got what we came for."

"Right away Dabi! *NO WAY DO IT YOURSELF!*"

Cold hands left him and he hit the ground hard. Katsuki strained to get back up, limbs feeling heavier than they should. Katsuki dragged his eyes up catching sight of a man in an obnoxious top hat and donning a bizarre looking mask strolling lazily towards him, the shadows of a few others moving in the background. He couldn't move and try as he might he couldn't even produce a small spark.

"Now, now, don't fret. I promise this won't hurt a bit." The overdressed magician sang as he stepped up.

The last thing Katsuki remembered hearing was Mandalay relay yet another message into his head, the feeling and sound that usually accompanied her Quirk completely lost on him.

In the name of Eraserhead, you have permission to fight...

There was quiet for a beat and then she spoke again, her voice echoing painfully in his head.

We've also identified one of their targets. They are looking for someone called Kacchan! Kacchan should avoid fighting and get to safety!

Katsuki laughed, a sad smile on his face, as everything around him became muted and dead looking. Fucking Deku. Always fucking Deku.

And everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

So that's that. What do you think's going to happen next?

Want to once again thank everyone that's read this, or took the time to comment, i haven't had a chance to reply to any lately but i do really appreciate and read them all.

Life has been pretty hectic lately and will be for me for the next few weeks at least. And i've given up on a dedicated posting schedule for this since i seem to suck at it :) will probably be next month at the earliest.

If you want to stay up to date with how things are going or just want to chat/shout at him, you can do so on my twitter;
<https://twitter.com/SuperiorKats>

Stay safe and healthy and see you all next time.

P.S just incase i didn't manage to make it clear the italicised font that is in bold is Katsuki's own voice, plain italicised is the other voice in his head and anything italicised in speech marks is Mandalay.

Need to Know

Chapter Summary

Midoriya's in denial, Kirishima has had enough, Todoroki has an alarming realization and Aizawa's ready to commit a murder or six.

Chapter Notes

Hi, hi, everyone! It's been a while and a lot has happened. I finally moved out, graduated uni and had made more than phonecalls to last a lifetime, I will never ever feel comfortable making phonecalls :)

This chapter was a real challenge to write as it took me forever to get into the mindset of each character. Todoroki being the hardest because I couldn't quite find the right tone for his own reasoning. But i'm happy enough with this now that it's ready to be uploaded.

As I mentioned on twitter this was going to be a double upload, but Chapter 9 needs a bit of tweaking after some last minute edits done to this one. It will be up in the next few days :)

As always I hope you enjoy! I look forward to all the comments, as I love reading what you all think!!! Not to mention it keeps me motivated, still have a ton to reply to from last chapter so responses will be incoming :)

Trigger warnings; implied/referenced bullying, implied/referenced suicide/baiting, cursing, violence and injury.

Also i'm introducing some EraserMic here. I sort of loosely hinted at it forever ago in an early chapter and it will be mentioned more in future as Aizawa gets his act together. I love their friendship in the anime/manga and for the purposes of this story they are in a relationship here :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The relentless feeling of having to be ready to rush into action at a moments notice wasn't unfamiliar to Shouta. It came with the job, being a Pro Hero and a teacher to the next generation, he always had to be prepared for anything. From the usual daily bickering among his students to the more serious Villain related problems. That said, the last thing he had ever anticipated during the Summer Camp was a full scale attack from the League of Villains. Even with all the precautions set in place to avoid any interference from the outside during the excursion the Villains still managed to find them. Not only that, but the bastards even achieved the one thing he had prayed they wouldn't.

Midoriya was a bloodied mess when Shouta saw him, in a one track frenzy, speaking a mile a minute and with young Kota clinging to his back. The fact the kid was still standing was a testament to just how headstrong and determined this problem student was, not to mention foolish. He expected no less from his students, but Midoriya didn't know when to stop, didn't have an off switch for when he'd pushed beyond the normal limits and was on the verge of doing irreparable damage. Any more and the kid would literally end up killing himself. Even with his arms hanging broken and limp by his sides it was clear Midoriya wasn't going to stop any time soon. He might be running on pure adrenaline right now but that would only last for so long and Shouta knew from experience that the crash after would be dire. He had to get him out of the fight and to safety.

But things just went from bad to worse.

He was about to send Midoriya on to the Lodge with Kota and head to Mandalay himself, when the Lodge was sent up in flames and a second Nomu (just like the first) appeared. It was then Shouta knew he'd have to give the students permission to fight, there could be countless more of the creatures or Villains just waiting to attack. So against his better judgment Shouta sent the weary Midoriya back into the fray with a message that they all could fight in self-defence, a message he heard successfully delivered not long later and just as the second Nomu got a good hit on him while simultaneously disintegrating into dirt as his own strike successfully made contact. And the other Nomu, it was gone too.

Hearing Mandalay announce his instructions eased his worry only a fraction, but the following warning of the Villain's target being *Kacchan* had Shouta working double time to get around the pain of

the wound the ghastly Nomu had left him with. It couldn't have been more than 10 minutes since he'd lost sight of the same student, that was too long given the current situation and new information. Yes, the other students were just as important but he knew vaguely where Bakugou was and if he was a known target then it was a priority to protect him. Not having confirmed eyes on Bakugou went from being the least of his worries to his top priority when Vlad and the other students vacated the flaming building minus Bakugou. And before he knew it, the fight was over. The Villain's were gone, UA's reputation further disgraced, his own reputation as a competent teacher put into question as he lay bleeding out and unable to walk and Bakugou Katsuki... he was missing. No, he was *kidnapped*, in the hands of Villains and Shouta was powerless to do anything about it.

Shouta tried, he really tried, to keep himself calm and collected as the EMT's looked him over before the tedious journey to the nearest hospital. He supposes nearly losing a leg would have most people close to breaking point, but not him. Not when the last he'd seen of a currently missing and targeted student was his ass disappearing around the back of the Lodge. A student he was repeatedly assured the Search Party left at the Camp would find. Shouta highly doubted it. Getting Bakugou, it seemed, was the Villains main objective. Why else would they pull back unless they had what they wanted?

Thinking back now it was almost too convenient how it all played out. The villains were more prepared this time. The USJ had been a brawl, everyone for themselves. This was coordinated. Every possible outcome addressed and Quirks used to their full advantage. Divided and conquer, the same method as their first attempt, only much better executed. Their only saving grace was the smaller numbers and the adaptiveness of their students.

Despite the evidence posing the worst, Shouta dared to hope. Hoped that the Search Party would find Bakugou just passed out and annoyed at having missed out. It was easy enough to imagine the perturbed scowl on his face, easier still to hear him scoff and curse about being able to handle himself just fine.

What still wasn't adding up for Shouta was Bakugou's lack of using his own Quirk. Of course he knew his students were aware that using their Quirks in combat was not allowed without express permission but he'd never said anything about not using it to aid their retreat. He knew from the extensively detailed essay Bakugou had given him that he would often use a Nitroglycerin-neutralizer at night, but he'd figured that was only when he hadn't been able to use his Quirk

enough to work off the excess before the end of the day. He was left wondering what had prompted Bakugou to use it prematurely, or at all, during the camp? With no set itinerary there was no telling what they'd be doing or when. Shouta thoroughly enjoyed watching them adapt to the randomness of the events they'd all planned. So, why give himself the handicap?

His initial assumption had been that Bakugou was trying to challenge himself, yet again. The boy, similar to Midoriya, didn't know when to stop when it came to pushing his limits and most of the time it was done to extreme lengths. But then he recalled witnessing a rare sight; Bakugou shivering and soaked, hiding his tears, avoiding eye contact and Shouta immediately shut that idea down. There was no way Bakugou was in his right mind or even remotely thinking properly about camp or training; not judging by how detached he was just sitting there in Mandalay's office. How uncharacteristically quiet he was the entire time. How defeated he looked when Shouta had explained just what he was being accused of.

Shouta didn't need to be a mind reader to know that Bakugou wasn't guilty. It was evident in the jumbled delivery from his accusers, and the taut lines of old stress running through his student's brow, lengths different from the same lines that marked his signature frustration. So arriving at the Hospital to be told that said student was just simply *missing* and not the more obvious *kidnapped* that his mind (and the evidence) was supplying was infuriating. Bakugou was compromised before the attack had even started and now they were just leaving his absence as *missing*. A Pro Hero, Ragdoll was being considered kidnapped or worse with the blood found at the scene of her disappearance. Why Bakugou was being treated any different in this situation was beyond him.

And it only got worse when he watched the Press Conference.

It had barely been 24 hours since he'd had emergency treatment on his leg, approaching two days since the whole ordeal. Present Mic, as Shouta called his partner in company, or Hizashi (as he called him in private) came in to see him the first chance he was allowed. Difficult seeing as they were all on lockdown in a single ward. The loud blone had come with the news that the students were being seen too, the injured were not critical and that Bakugou was being listed as missing pending further investigation. Also with the news that Nedzu was going to attend a press conference with Vlad and that he under strict instruction was to 'rest up and recover'. As much as Shouta wanted to tell him to shove it, he wasn't going anywhere with his leg in the state

it was. Nerves severed to the point he couldn't actually feel anything and with walking was also being hit and miss, but once Recovery Girl got around to him he'd be able to act on all his urges. The main one now being to punch Nedzu in his snout.

Shouta had worked for years in UA and not once had he ever considered saying or thinking anything bad about the principal, the odd man-rat creature was amicable, loved to curl up in his scarf and also encouraged his use of deception to push the students, but after that press conference he was just about ready to spout every single curse word he knew and then some.

Hizashi flicked the tv off as Shouta sat there fuming and itching to move.

"The fuck was that?!" Shouta growled, attempting to pull the IV from his arm with little care for the discomfort he was causing himself. Sitting up was a task and a half with his leg bound within an inch of it's life but he managed until Hizashi literally held him down. "Let me go, I have to knock some sense into those idiots!"

"Sho, calm down. Chiyo will be here any minute now. I know you're pissed, I am too, but wait at least until you're fit to start moving!" The loud blond was all but literally screaming in his ear. Strong arms were holding him firmly and gently, a lifeline of calm that was very much needed right now. "Take a minute yeah? Breathe babe. Breathe."

Shouta breathed in, letting himself feel the air filling his lungs as his husband continued to calm him down. The warmth radiating off Hizashi's palms rubbing up and down his back never failed to sooth him. But this time, it didn't have the full affect. Where usually the tension would leave him entirely until the next stressful day, this time it just wouldn't budge. He couldn't relax, not when there was a student in need of help and clearly not getting it. He already took too long to see what Chiyo had noticed right away, and who knows how long this had actually been going on. For all they knew it only came to light because of the health checks. Either way, Bakugou had been struggling for too long on his own and just when Shouta was about to get through to him the worst thing imaginable happened.

"I can hear you thinking, care to share? Maybe I can lighten the load a bit?"

Shouta looked at his Hizashi, mentally scoffing at those stupid yellow tinted sunglasses he always insisted on wearing. Even when they were

off duty he was never without his eye accessories. As much as it annoyed the crap out of Shouta, especially when they were indoors, he loved that about him, and right now he needed something stupid to curse at.

“Those glasses look stupid, Hizashi.” He grunted trying to distract himself from the near uncontrollable urge to punch someone or something. Hearing his husband laugh was helping, as did watching him bashfully remove the glasses and slip them into his pocket but ultimately he knew he wasn’t going to be distracted for long. Shouta sighed loudly, letting himself slam back into the pillow angrily.

“Those bastards didn’t even *mention* Bakugou... they didn’t... fuck. Are they at least doing something about it?”

Hizashi slowly pulled back, falsely sure enough that Shouta would stay on the bed comfortably for at least a little while. Without the silly coloured lenses Shouta could clearly see the green sparks in his golden eyes, and again it was comforting even if there was a creeping of concerned annoyance there.

“Not that I’ve heard. They’re still debriefing the kids.” his frustration was clear and Shouta knew why. It had been upward of 48hours now. Two bloody days and, between the Pro’s, UA staff and Police, there hadn’t been a word said about a more than potential kidnapping. Shouta didn’t care if they were still scouring the forest near camp, if they hadn’t found Bakugou by now they weren’t going to, least of all because they were looking in the wrong place.

“They did try getting in contact with his parents but... they can’t seem to reach them.”

That fact, somehow, didn’t surprise him. After the last few days of camp, Shouta was beginning to think it wasn’t so far-fetched that his rising problem child was having issues at home. He’d never considered that Bakugou’s home life was anything but pleasant. His parents were well known fashion designers, his mother a former model, they were certainly well off. The kid was a straight-A student. Sure he had some behavioural issues but what teenager didn’t? As far as Shouta was concerned there wasn’t a spoiled brat alive that didn’t have a few issues regarding self entitlement. Bakugou made it clear he thought himself superior but now after hearing the kid all but beg him not to call home... he couldn’t decide whether that was out of the fear of facing the consequences or if there was something worse going on. Bakugou never seemed to be lacking attention, but if the attention was

of a negative nature, then it was an entirely different story.

That of course was all on the assumption that home *was* the problem. He still hadn't sorted the issue with whatever the hell happened that night between Bakugou and Ashido. The possibility that it was, as Chiyosuggested, bullying was still very high in the ranking. His head was a tired mess of options and he both wanted and needed the mystery to be solved. But first he needed something to be done about his missing student. Before Hizashi could even move to stop him, Shouta was once again on his way to standing. He'd done nothing about it so far, like hell he was going to sit around and continue to do nothing like everyone else.

"Sho- please, just until Recovery Girl gets to see you."

Luckily for his husband, because Shouto wasn't planning on stopping this time, said Hero just opened the door.

The two Pro's froze as they met her unimpressed gaze.

"Charming as ever, Eraser." She said with a forced chuckle and a roll of her eyes. Shouta slumped back yet again as Hizashi quickly moved a chair forward for her. His husband stood back, and with worried eyes watched the two of them. Shouta waited impatiently as Chiyo got herself up on the chair and then his head was spinning for a completely different reason after she laid a healing kiss on his cheek. "Now, knowing you, you're itching to get out and do something about his mess, but you really need to listen when I say that you have to rest."

Shouta wanted to argue, but his own poor sleep schedule even before taking a hit was working double time on him. Staying awake wasn't going to be as easy as it usually was, and even then it wasn't the easiest thing to do.

"Bakugou..." he mumbled, straining to stay awake. But the harder he tried the more easily sleep seemed to take him.

"Toshinori is working with the police. I'm not certain of the details but they have a lead on a potential League safe house. It seems Ms. Yaoyorozu's quick thinking allowed her to get a tracker on one of the Nomu they used in the attack."

Shouta wanted to argue. *Potential* leads weren't good enough, the League's safehouse wasn't all that important either, not unless Bakugou was there and with Villain's working on this scale there was

little to no doubt in his mind that they had multiple safehouses. Would they really keep themselves and those Beasts in the same place? Bakugou could be anywhere. Though it made sense to focus on what they had, and what they had was a lead pointing to somewhere the Villain's might still be. If the League were in any way smart they'd have moved on to the next location already and that was just about the worst that could happen.

He knew he wasn't going to rest easy or remotely well, not so long as Bakugou was missing and he didn't know what was being done to fix that. The tug of sleep pulled his eyes shut even as he fought the feeling. Regardless of how many people told him so, if anything happened to Bakugou, Shouta knew he'd never stop feeling guilty about it.

Green, tired eyes opened sluggishly and blinked at the unfamiliar ceiling above. Izuku's brain was slow to provide him with information that came with waking up. After what felt like hours spent staring at the same corner of the room, Izuku eventually found himself at the conclusion that he was in a hospital. It was the speckled, square ceiling tiles, marked off evenly with the incessant hum of those florescent tube lightbulbs they're so fond of using in such places. He was more than familiar with waking up in medical rooms or infirmaries; since meeting All Might and coming to UA it had become something of a bad habit, a habit he was honestly trying hard to break. This time, however, it was kind of, sort of, necessary? Maybe not necessary exactly, but he's sure that if he hadn't pushed beyond his limits, both Kota and he would have been goners at the hands of the Villain Muscular.

The dregs of the dream he'd had, or rather the memory he'd relived, was still flickering and so vivid in his mind. He could almost believe it just happened yesterday and not over a decade ago. Strange how his mind had chosen the same memory he'd reminisced about with Kacchan just a few days ago to wake him. Stranger still how it was one of the few times he'd felt like Kacchan needed saving too...

They sat at the dining table in Kacchan's house while Uncle Masaru tried to clean up the ashen remains of the tent they'd spent the better part of the day putting up in the back garden. Izuku watched through the window while Kacchan huffed as Aunt Mitsuki scolded him.

"Dammit, Katsuki! Is you blowing up everything going to be a trend?! First you burn a hole in the new carpet, then your clothes and now the bloody tent! KATSUKI! Are you even listening to me brat?!"

"I already told you it was an accident!" Kacchan yelled back. Izuku cringed at the volume.

"Kacchan..." he whispered at his friend, willing him to be reasonable about this. Izuku wouldn't dream of speaking to his mother like that... then again, his own mother would never talk to him like how Aunt Mitsuki was speaking to Kacchan right now, even if he'd done something wrong.

"Tell her, Zuku, it was an accident! I didn't mean for the tent to catch fire! I was just trying to cheer you up!" Kacchan all but pleaded, a tone of voice he'd never heard and really didn't want to ever hear again from his friend.

Words failed him, as he stuttered and fumbled utterly terrified to say the wrong thing and get in trouble himself or Kacchan in worse trouble.

"Izuku, darling, don't you worry. Ignore him, don't let him bully you into covering his ass." Aunt told him, and Izuku was relieved to hear a much quieter and sweeter tone. That relief disappeared the second Kacchan rounded on him.

"What the hell Zuku!"

"KATSUKI! Watch your fucking language brat!" Aunt snapped back smacking Kacchan up the back of the head.

Izuku gasped, as Kacchan went quiet while Aunt fumed glaring down at him. He couldn't remember ever seeing Aunt so mad, or Kacchan so... stunned. Kacchan was always so eager and full of confidence, he didn't cower like this for anything.

Aunt's expression softened considerably as her gaze turned to back him, "Izuku dear, could you go play in the living room while I have a little chat with Katsuki please?"

Something in his gut was telling him to stay put, a glance in Kacchan's direction only reinforced that feeling. But another look at Aunt and he knew there wasn't an option. The last thing he wanted was to get in

trouble.

"Okay, Auntie." He chirped, hopping of the too high chair and running off, his bright red shoes slapping the ground as he went.

The second he left the dining room, the door was shut behind him. Izuku sat by the sofa taking the All Might plushie that he and Kacchan shared between them in his hands. Kacchan had won it in a claw machine one day, and when Izuku had failed to win his own, Kacchan had suggested they share. Izuku squeezed it tightly when he heard raised voices and shouting from behind the door. And when things got quiet he feared the worst. His young four year old mind didn't really understand why, but a part of him wanted to do something about it.

What would All Might do?

He asked himself that question over and over, staring at the plush toy, before thinking to himself, that maybe this once instead of Kacchan saving him, he could be Kacchan's hero. He only just made it to the door when it swung open to reveal an irate Kacchan. He barely managed to say a word before a warm hand gripped his and they were running out the front door.

"We're going to the park." Kacchan declared, dragging him along, in such a rush that Izuku ended up dropping the All Might toy as they were leaving.

The distinct drying tracks of damp down his friends cheeks convinced him not to argue. "Okay, Kacchan." He said instead with a smile, and in synch they ran off together.

It was the last time he remembered seeing that plush All Might, or Kacchan willingly taking his hand, the only time if he was being honest. That was the same day things starting changing between them and Izuku only realized how much things had changed when Kacchan fell into that stream in the woods a few weeks later. That was the day Kacchan completely rejected his helping hand. And Izuku to this day, still doesn't know where he went wrong.

As Izuku tried to supress the memory once more he let his tired eyes wander back and forth across the room trying to find the energy to lift his head. The throbbing ache in his bandaged arms was of little consequence when his only concern was seeing if everyone else was okay. In particular he was worried about Kacchan, the last time he'd laid eyes on the blond he hadn't looked so well.

Izuku lay there for a while just thinking and becoming aware of that ache slowly fading away, whatever the Nurses had given him was

clearly working. Or perhaps Recovery Girl had been to visit.

As his mind cleared he was suddenly greeted with the haunting image of what had happened at camp. Villains had attacked them. *Found* them somehow. Despite the measures their Sensei's took to get them there safely, somehow the League of Villains had found them and wrought havoc on what was supposed to be a "peaceful" week of training. There wasn't a doubt in his mind that it was the same group that had attacked them at the USJ. If the Nomu he'd seen wasn't evidence enough the too familiar warp gates they used to escape was. The Villain's then seemed more than motivated to hold a grudge against a class of teens. He didn't need to know why, the only question that remained was how. How had they found them? Were they tailed? Tracked via their phones? Was there a traitor among them? One of the students? A teacher?

As one question became a hundred and more, he could only groan at the lack of answers coming to mind. With nothing better to do but lie there and wait, he allowed himself to think, tried to find anything in the days leading up to the attack that would hint at a Traitor among them. However, the only one who'd been acting seriously out of character was... Kacchan. He hadn't been himself ever since the exams, and Izuku couldn't figure out why.

Kacchan was... complicated. So multifaceted that Izuku was sure he'd need several lifetimes to unravel the enigma that was his childhood friend. That or the godlike luck of getting Kacchan to actually open up and talk to him. Such luck that Kirishima seemed to possess. Izuku was in no way jealous... at least not jealous enough to say anything about it, but he was irritated at the way the redhead seemed to be disregarding Kacchan lately. If Izuku had been able to befriend him that easily he'd never give it up no matter how petty he was feeling.

Until that first day of camp, Kacchan hadn't properly spoken to him in years, and by *properly* he meant civilly. In fact it was strange just how civil it was, not that Izuku was going to start complaining. Throughout middle school every exchange was laced with the intent to hurt and push him away, and no matter how reasonable Izuku tried to be Kacchan always responded with anger. Even with the sudden change of demeanour, that pleasant chat had only raised more questions and concerns. And not just regarding Kacchan's sudden change in behaviour, but how everyone else was acting around him too.

Izuku had always been observant, to the point that he was aware it made some people uncomfortable. Kacchan in particular had always

been up front about how much he hated the way Izuku wouldn't settle for just knowing things, how he had to write it all down in his notebooks. It was undoubtedly one of the things that put strain on their relationship as they grew up, that and the fact Izuku was Quirkless. But none of that ever put a stop to Izuku taking notice of everything. So, when Kacchan came into class the day following the exams the same as ever and then after lunch was so suddenly quiet it was easy to notice. Todoroki instigating an unnecessary fight that only got Kacchan in trouble was likely the cause but when it persisted until the end of the day and the next and the next... Izuku didn't think it was something so trivial as a fight causing such a drastic transformation among not just Kacchan but majority of the class.

A part of Izuku deep down had a strong feeling he knew what it was. But he didn't want to accept that. Didn't want to think of it as a possibility. But Todoroki *was* acting odd too. More odd if he considered how disconnected he usually was from his peers and how he was suddenly surrounded by his classmates almost all the time. Their classmates would approach Todoroki with questions and looking to talk, something that had never happened before. Weirder still it was Todoroki inviting him out to places during that first week of summer, something Izuku had never thought Todoroki would do, not this early in their friendship at least. His friend had never been the most in touch, was more focused on honing his Quirk to be better than his father. So for the entire class to be magically more than simply classmates with him was bizarre.

Todoroki had always struck him as avoidant of unnecessary conflict, so him initiating the fight with Kacchan in gym Gamma was the first red flag. The little lie he told about apologising to Kacchan was the second, but something he could easily forgive. It was something easily forgotten in the explosive frenzy that followed but the constant animosity and the glaring towards Kacchan, the always running to Izuku's defence over the smallest transgressions... that was just infuriating.

Izuku couldn't help but think the worst. If Todoroki had told someone else about how Kacchan used to bully him it would explain a lot more than any of his other theories. Still, Izuku refused to think so lowly of his friend, he'd shared with him the most intimate and painful moments of his youth and Todoroki didn't strike him as the sort to go spreading such sensitive information. The very fact that he'd made sure they were somewhere quiet and away from prying eyes during the Sports Festival before he shared his own struggles told him so. He saw no reason why he would treat anyone else's any different. But

now, lying in his hospital bed and with far too much time to think, the worst was seeming all the more plausible.

Still Izuku looked elsewhere for an explanation.

The day after the exams Izuku noticed makeup hiding what were likely the start of tired bags under Kacchan's eyes, supplying him with the fact that Kacchan hadn't slept well and if the fact he'd ended up being late several days in a row told him anything more it was that Auntie was probably to blame.

As far back as Izuku could remember, even before Kacchan got his Quirk, Auntie Mitsuki had always taken the tough love approach to parenting. Where his own mother was soft and forgiving, Auntie was harsh and bitter. And if that memory he recalled was anything to go by then Kacchan would take any of her words to heart. Kacchan would always want to stay out longer or have last minute sleepovers at his house when his parents had some little reason to raise their voices at him. Izuku had always assumed Auntie's roughness ended around the same time as their weekly sleepovers, but now he wasn't so sure.

And still with all these thoughts and little details floating in his head Izuku couldn't decide what he'd rather the issue be. Couldn't figure out what else would have had to change to bring about such extreme shifts in everyone.

One day everything was fine, the next all the progress Kacchan had made since starting UA was practically undone. The fight with Todoroki in Gym Gamma, and then the outburst in Homeroom again led by Todoroki (if the ice on Kacchan's uniform was anything to go by), Kirishima and the rest of the *Bakusquad* ignoring him. Everyone was shifting away from Kacchan. And Izuku couldn't understand why. More precisely he didn't want what he thought was the reason why to be the truth.

They were training to be Heroes. Heroes save people and help them when they're in need. The idea that his classmates were responsible for Kacchan's deteriorating state and deliberately targeting Kacchan was... nearly unthinkable.

But what else could be happening for it all to change so drastically? If only asking Kacchan had been a viable option in the beginning.

Go. Away. Deku. You just make things worse!

Kacchan had told him that before promptly slamming a door in his face. Izuku had known using a direct approach wasn't going to work but he wanted to at least try. Kacchan had been so close to sharing with him before Todoroki interrupted them earlier that day. So Izuku tried the slower approach after that. Took his time, and was patient, until it became clear that there was something missing from his bank of information and no one seemed willing to share it with him. It infuriated him to no end, and the sudden increase in coddling from his peers and friends only annoyed him more. Todoroki especially. Izuku had thought they were on equal footing after their battle at the festival, yet his recent behaviour would have him think otherwise.

Icy Hot is an ignorant asshole and a fucking liar... watch what you tell him.

Kacchan was trying to tell him without actually telling him, he knows that now. Typical Kacchan. But then Izuku knows he's never been the best at interpreting what Kacchan meant sometimes. He might just genuinely not like Todoroki... though there was something in the closed off looks Kacchan would give him. Looks that whispered to Izuku that the answer was right in front of him and Kacchan didn't understand how he hadn't noticed yet. Kacchan looked hurt, and Izuku hated seeing Kacchan hurt. It wasn't a common sight, but it was one Izuku knew never meant anything good. This time it was as if whatever had happened was something Kacchan had been warding off for a long time. But even wracking his brain offered nothing credible, nothing beyond the most damning option. But he had to trust that his friends were just as good as he thought they were. They were all aiming to be Heroes after all, for whatever reasons they all had. They weren't to blame, so it had to be something to do with Auntie... again...

He groaned. With the last clear image in his head being of the Lodge going up in blue flames, it was difficult to focus for too long on any one detail and as with all things Kacchan, it was harder than he'd anticipated to just let it go. So difficult in fact he still hadn't succeeded in burying it.

He let out another loud sigh as his tired mind struggled to compact all the information into manageable chunks and that's when the door slid open.

"Midoriya?"

Izuku let his eyes wander towards the upbeat questioning tone of

Kaminari by the door. He barely had a chance to reply before the electric blond was bounding towards him. Izuku took note of how dirty he was, and the sudden realization that Kacchan and the others must have still be inside the burning Lodge had him reeling.

“Oh my god! Midoriya you’re awake!” Kaminari exclaimed, his loudness summoning the others. Before he could get a word out Izuku was being overwhelmed by his classmates, all of whom were more than relieved to see him awake. As nice as it all was, he was far past his wits end with the fawning and fussing. When it was just Uraraka that was fine, manageable but with everyone fussing over him he couldn’t help but want to snap. He would clench his fists to hold himself back, but the casts had them fixed firmly with open palms. They only meant well, there was no point in getting mad over it or so he kept telling himself.

“How are you feeling, Deku-kun? We were so worried.” Uraraka nearly sobbed, clearly only just holding herself back from jumping on the bed with him. He liked to think the bulky casts on his arms in place of her makeshift splints weren’t the only reason he was spared.

“I’ve been worse honestly. How is everyone?” he wheezed, he could tell no one was impressed with his attempted humour, but they brushed it off quickly when suddenly he erupted into a coughing fit. Once again Uraraka was fussing. Iida helped him sit up, buffing up the pillows behind him and precariously patting his back. Kaminari offered him a glass of water from the jug on the beside, and with as dry as his throat was Izuku gulped it down. And as humiliating as it was not being able to hold the glass himself, he was grateful for their assistance.

“Be careful, Deku-kun. You shouldn’t push yourself, Recovery Girl said you’d need lots of rest after everything that happened. Everyone’s fine, and it’s, uh, been three days since the attack on Camp.”

“Three days?” he gasped once more coming close to drowning Kaminari with the second drink he’d poured for him.

A lot can happen in three days.

“Aizawa-sensei said we all had to go home if we where healthy, but we wanted to stay until you woke up! So... we did.” Kaminari was shouting again, the others in his usual friend group nodding along. All with the exception of Kirishima who he noticed, now that Izuku wasn’t distracted, was standing off to the side apart from the rest and

looking like he was seconds away from throwing up. And each of them, and Sato too, were marred with soot and light burns. Cheeks red like they'd been in the sun for too long. They were still wearing whatever they'd had on the night of the Attack. They really hadn't left the hospital then. Sometimes he felt so lucky to have made this many caring friends. Going from none to many had been quite the culture shock.

"We got you a melon too." Mineta mumbled from somewhere out of his line of sight.

As flattered as he was that they all stayed just for him his mind was elsewhere as he looked around the faces and noticed a more than a few missing. He was only a little ashamed that he only truly wanted to know about one of them.

"Where's-?"

"Jirou and Hagakure are still getting treatment for the effects of that Gas Quirk. Momo is also being treated for a head injury just down the hall. Recovery Girl has seen to them and expects them all to make a full recovery. I believe Tokoyami is currently being interviewed by the Police, since he was apparently one of the Villain's targets, but he's otherwise in good health." Iida rhymed off robotically as if he was reading from a cue card, arm chopping in a downward motion with every name he listed. "1-B are also well, if you are curious."

"Great!" Izuku exclaimed, with a tightness in his tone that he hoped didn't come across as sarcastic as it sounded to his own ears. Even with all that good news, that still wasn't everyone accounted for. He had to wonder; Did they actually forget about him or was it a deliberate omission?

"And Kacchan?"

The flash of a baffled look on Iida's face screamed 'deliberate' at him. His mind screamed at him that the reason Kacchan wasn't himself was staring him in the face, that everyone in this room was the cause and yet he still couldn't bring himself to accept that. They were all going to be Heroes together. Pushing someone away and down into the dirt, lying so blatantly to their Teacher to get that person in trouble on purpose wasn't something Heroes did, not even to Villains. Because at the end of the day, Villains were people too, they deserved as much respect as the next person. But his classmates... they had done those things... and it was like they were hoping his brain would be so

muddled from the shock of his injuries to not remember Kacchan. News flash, Kacchan was pretty much always on his mind. How had they seriously not realized that yet?

The silence was persisting, and Izuku wasn't liking it one bit.

"What about Kacchan? He's okay too right? He was with Todoroki and Kirishima and the others, in the Lodge when they attacked. I'm guessing he just went home instead of sticking around?" *Typical Kacchan*. He laughed half-heartedly not even close to convincing himself that he thought that was the truth. Not only was that not like Kacchan, but he also had a strong feeling in his gut that it wasn't even close to the truth and his gut was never wrong when it came to Kacchan.

Only more quiet came, and it was not promising. The subtle conversation going on between everyone was even less so. Izuku let his eyes land on Todoroki, who surprisingly hadn't said anything so far. All this time Izuku hadn't been able to shake the idea that Todoroki was involved somehow, that the main reason for Kacchan's behaviour and the sudden shift in the class started with him. Why else would he fight Kacchan? Why else would there be such a distinct change in the atmosphere around the two of them?

"Todoroki-kun, where is Kacchan?"

Dual coloured eyes landed on him with little to no emotion in them. And while that was usual for his friend, Todoroki had come a long way since the Sports Festival. He was more open about things. Especially with Izuku. And Izuku, he'd learned some of his tells.

He witnessed a million thoughts cross the distance in those dual-coloured eyes and then there was a flood of warmth being directed at him. The awkward boy gave him his best attempt at a smile and looked him right in the eyes.

"That's not important right now. Don't worry about him."

Huh? Was that supposed to reassure him?

Izuku wasn't sure how Todoroki expected him to react to that, but he was doing the exact opposite of not worrying now. Not that that hadn't already been worried sick.

"What do you mean?" he focused on those who he knew to be the *Bakusquad* as he tried to sit up a little straighter. "What happened?"

“Deku-kun, you should lie down, you’ll only hurt yourself.” Uraraka urged.

“Yes, Midoriya, your health is most important right now.” Iida told him.

Most of the others spoke over each other, the quieter ones (Shouji and Kouda) choosing to stay quiet. Izuku refused to listen, only forcing himself to sit up regardless of the discomfort it was causing him.

“Deku-kun be careful-“

“I’M NOT MADE OF GLASS!” he couldn’t help the shriek that left him. It was so unlike him, but right now he couldn’t help it.

Ever since the Exam’s they’d been fussing over him like he a light breeze would knock him over. At first it was endearing, Izuku had never had so many people care about him at once, but the more it went on the more suppressed he felt. He’d had enough of the coddling and the light touches, he just wanted them to see him as equal and capable, as more than useless and helpless. He’d felt that way for too long and he didn’t want to repeat that part of his life. Stepping foot outside with them lately was equivalent to facing Villains one on one in their eyes. The entire week he spent before camp entailed his closest friends fretting over every little thing, and god was it annoying. He’s surprised he hadn’t snapped sooner.

Right now, Kacchan’s whereabouts (to him) where a mystery and after everything he’d witnessed at camp before and after the Villains he was done with being kept in the dark. All his questions went unanswered and all he wanted was someone to give it to him straight. He took a breath, slow and deep, a poor attempt to calm himself before he snapped even more.

“Sorry... but you wouldn’t tell me not to worry unless there was something to worry about! So tell me. Where. Is. Kacchan?!” he couldn’t help the rising volume in his voice, it went hand in hand with the urgency that was making his heart race. Did Kacchan get hurt? Is he unconscious? Worse?! No, Kacchan wouldn’t... he was far too stubborn...

“We don’t know.”

Finding Kirishima again among the crowd was easy when all eyes were immediately drawn to him as he spoke the words Izuku’s mind had just supplied to him.

“We don’t know where he is.” The redhead said again, and suddenly Izuku could understand that pale sickly look on his usually bright, smiling face. The urge to move, to be doing something, anything, was so overwhelming Izuku couldn’t just sit still anymore.

Inches from getting to his feet despite the ache in his bones, Uraraka tried to steer him back to the bed. It was awkward to move when he felt stuck so stiffly, more awkward doing it in opposition to a friend. He kept his eyes trained on Kirishima. The redhead seemed intent on trying to hide himself behind everyone still.

“Deku-kun, stop you’ll really hurt yourself again! You really should be resting. Forget about Bakugou! He wouldn’t be this worried about you!” Uraraka spoke up again.

“How can you say that?!” he practically screamed, why was no one being straight with him? Why was his mind still so damn slow right now, he’s sure all the answers are right in front of him, he should know what’s going on by now and still not knowing is annoying him. It can’t be what the facts are pointing to and he’s going to scream for real the next time someone tries to beat around bush. “We’re Class 1-A, we’ve faced Villains before together! How can you be so okay with just *forgetting* about Kacchan?! What did he do?!”

More silence met his words. And he was more than ready to metaphorically explode in their faces just like Kacchan would. The massive breath he’d need just for such an outburst was lost the second Todoroki spoke again, the most sincere and genuine he’d heard him in a long time. The look in his eyes told Izuku Todoroki believed what he was saying was truth.

“Bakugou is responsible for the Attack on Camp.” His friend paused and Izuku felt his jaw drop.

“That’s not- K-kacchan wouldn’t-“

“He knew the Villain that attacked us at the Lodge. They were... friendly with one another.”

No way. Even if Kacchan did know the Villain, he would never do something like this. Not even for petty revenge. He had always been hellbent on being a Hero, the Best, Number 1! No, this wasn't right, there had to be something else.

His next question died on his tongue the second an Auxiliary Nurse abruptly slipped the door open.

“What did I tell you all about visiting! Only three per room! Out. Now!” he snapped, at the overcrowded room of teens. “You should have told me Midoriya-san was awake the second you knew!” he scolded.

Something in his gut twisted at how eagerly some of them moved to escape the situation. Happy to take the out given. Even Todoroki, though he supposed that was more to do with following an authority figures command than anything. Kirishima lingered, slowly walking around the bed and towards the door. He paused to look back, a guilt-ridden expression etched on his usually happy features telling Izuku it was the worst of the worst. The need to know was feral in his mind. He had to find out and he had to get better fast. This Nurse had better get him out of these casts asap or he’d rip out of them himself if he had too.

The moment the doors had closed behind them all, Shouto just stood and watched as Ashido whirled on Kirishima a glare that could rival Bakugou’s on her typically cheerful face.

“Why the hell did you say that?! We all agreed not to say anything because he’d end up doing something stupid... like going after Bakugou! The last thing we want is Midoriya getting hurt because of that jackass again!” she hissed at him, voice sharp but low so as to not let it carry into the nearby room.

Shouto didn’t argue with her, it’s exactly what Midoriya would do, and that worried him. His only relief right now was that Midoriya was still confined to his hospital bed recovering. Once he was out of those casts and able to move freely though... Shouto wasn’t sure what he was going to do. He’s certain that even though they don’t currently have a clue where the class bully is, that wouldn’t stop Midoriya. It would only make him try all the harder.

Try as he might he just couldn’t understand how Midoriya could favour Bakugou in any capacity. Even before their troubled history

was shared with him Shouto had never liked him. Even before their first proper class he knew he'd never warm up to boy. His posture, demeanour, facial expression, everything about him just screamed entitled. When Bakugou spoke his words were entitled too.

"I'm the best!"

"Don't get in my way extras!"

"DIE!"

There wasn't a single thing about Bakugou that Shouto would considered redeeming. He was rough, brutish, unkind and looked down on everyone around him. Bakugou was the epitome of self-obsessed for his own age group surpassed only by his not-so-loving father, Number 2 Pro Hero Endeavour. The similarities between the two were so striking Shouto initially struggled to tell them apart. But now he can. Bakugou seems more than happy to carry on unregretful of his actions, aloof and ignorant of the hurt he causes. At lease his father was slowly starting to reach a point where he knew he was in the wrong.

Shouto often replays the day after he'd issued his warning to Bakugou in his mind. How he had to watch Bakugou stroll into class completely indifferent and yell and curse at Midoriya for no reason and not long after how he physically hurt the Greenette for a simple accident. It was as if Bakugou truly didn't care and Shouto couldn't let someone like that carry on unpunished, let alone become a Hero. If there was one thing his father taught him it was that Villain's deserved what they get, and if he had to be the one do dish out retribution to Bakugou he would.

Being entrusted with Midoriya's past made him feel secure in the belief that they were friends. And being his first real and true friend, Shouto vowed to do anything in his power to protect him from the beast that was their class mate.

Telling the others... that hadn't been intentional. At first. He did well to keep himself in control for as long as he did. From the Sports Festival to the Practical's, Shouto kept the secret well, but seeing Bakugou punch and threaten Midoriya while they were meant to be working together in the exam was the breaking point. If he was still bullying his friend now, Shouto didn't think he ever would.

He'd iced over, steam streaming off his left not fast or hot enough to melt it. Iida and Uraraka, his other good friends, had been concerned.

Telling them seemed right. If he couldn't protect Midoriya on his own then telling Midoriya's other close friends would be okay. Right? Telling Bakugou's group seemed like next obvious step. A battle on two fronts was easily won after all. When they'd fought in the gym, albeit brief, and Aizawa had called on the Angry Exploding Bully, Midoriya had given chase apprehending their Sensei at the door and giving him the opportunity to answer Kirishima's question of why he was being so brutal with the honest to god truth.

"Because Bakugou deserves it for what he's done to Midoriya." He'd said and of course they'd thought he was referring the previous day's exam so he continued. *"He bullied and beat him for years. He even told Midoriya to kill himself. All because he was Quirkless at the time."*

The looks of shock and disbelief on their faces were priceless. It would never be as priceless as the stunned acceptance painted on Bakugou's that lunch break. Seeing the blond abandoned so completely and entirely helpless to do anything about it was... fulfilling. He felt good. There had been a pressure building in his chest from the moment he told them, a pressure he had felt was warning him he'd made a mistake. But seeing that dejected look on Bakugou, and the following frustration from how powerless he was with the entire class against him, made it go away. It was the best feeling he'd experienced since Midoriya helping him unleash his flames in their one-v-one.

All he wanted now was to keep Midoriya safe. From himself and from Bakugou especially. He'd had plenty of time to reflect on the interactions he'd observed between them since the beginning of the year. More than enough time to research valid reasons for them too. Not that he needed any more reason to exact this justice, he had all the reason he needed. And Bakugou was the one supplying it. To Todoroki there was nothing good in Bakugou. He was unfeeling and selfish and disregarded everyone around him and worked only to benefit himself. Only a true Villain with no regard for life or innocence would ever lay a finger on someone like Midoriya.

And only a Villain sympathiser or accomplice would side with him and yet here was Kirishima doing just that. Shouto didn't think the red head fully understanding the situation. He was too kind for his own good. Shouto stood as close as he could by the door to Midoriya's room, like a sentinel standing guard to ward off any ill intent. He stood and listened and watched as his classmates argued among themselves. To Shouto it mattered not if Kirishima had alluded to anything, Midoriya would find out soon and come to realize how evil his childhood bully truly was.

“You all might have agreed, but I didn’t! Why shouldn’t he go after Bakugou?! Why shouldn’t *we*?! He’s missing! Was probably kidnapped by the League and either way I don’t see the Pro’s doing anything about it!”

That was a good observation. It had been three days since the attack on camp. Day one was spent taking account of the damage and getting them all safely to the hospital. That’s when they first realised Bakugou was absent. Suspicious if you asked Shouto. The last he’d seen the blond he was outside with Aizawa-sensei and Aizawa-sensei, he was hurt. Given the circumstances that could only mean one thing to Shouto.

“Kiri...” Mina stared at the redhead and Shouto followed her gaze to the fierce determination on his face, her own amber eyes were anxious. “I know you really trusted him, but you heard him admit what he’s been doing and he wasn’t even regretful about it. Bakugou’s not a good person, probably never has been! I mean, he probably planned the whole attack!”

"I agree with Mina-chan." Tsu-chan offered, "That would make anyone willing to go after him an accomplice and a villain too."

Kirishima visibly blanched at their words, clearly struggling to grasp what she was trying to say. Shouto could tell it was hard for him to accept this. Even when he’d first told them, Kirishima had been very resistant to the idea and it was only once he’d heard it from Bakugou that he accepted it.

“How can you say that with a straight face?!”

“He *was* familiar with the Villain.” Todoroki offered plainly. “How else would they know each other if they weren’t working together?”

The Villain in question crossed his mind. Icy blue eyes, oddly familiar and devoid of any obvious emotion, piercing into the stunned blond as he smiled like a Cheshire cat before promptly melting to pile of muck. The look of denial on Bakugou’s face as he told them he didn’t know the guy was unbelievable. Bakugou wasn’t a good liar but there’s no way they weren’t familiar with each other.

“That Villain probably watched the Sports Festival, like a lot of people, and recognised him from there!” Kirishima argued.

“Yeah because the Sports Festival is a shining example of how *Heroic* Bakugou is.” Uraraka snapped. It wasn’t normal to see everyone this

riled up, least of all about Bakugou but Shouta knew this was more seriously with some of their classmates injured. Uraraka huffed with her arms folded with just as much conviction in this story as Mina had. Kirishima however still wasn't backing down, Shouto could admire that tenacity even if it was misplaced.

"Bakugou isn't a Villain. He's not a bad guy. Sure he did some horrible things in middle school but can all of you say you've always done the right thing, the *Heroic* thing every single time you were given a choice?!" he snapped back. He was so close to shouting. But he, like them all, knew the walls were thin, and the last thing they wanted was Midoriya stressing out even more.

It was then that red eyes, seeping with determination and conviction locked on him. "You know I'm right." Kirishima bored into him, and Shouto held his gaze, unaffected and blankly staring right back at him. "You've all taken this too far. Messing around in class was one thing, I'm not proud of it... but guys... beating him up? Actually hurting him... that's beyond too far. *That's Villainous!*"

Shouto wasn't in the mood to argue with him or anyone. But he would spare the time to tell him one thing, "Bakugou deserves far worse than what we're capable of right now. He's lucky we haven't told any of our teachers."

He watched Kirishima's flesh harden and return to normal as he controlled his clear frustration. Leagues better than a Villain like Bakugou was even remotely capable of.

"That's no reason to be beating him up!"

The confusion on everyone's faces was evident as Shouto looked around him. The fact Kirishima seemed so sure of himself made Shouto want to know more. Like *who* would Bakugou ever let beat him? The image of an angry flaming Endeavour towering above his small trembling form, sitting a pool of his own vomit flashed in his mind so suddenly Shouto had to shake it from his mind. The feeling left him unnerved.

Shouto looked up, the others, they really didn't have a clue what Kirishima was talking about.

"What are you talking about? Beating him up?" Ojirou questioned, looking around everyone for some hint as to what was going on. "I agreed to bothering him with my tail at night, but I didn't exactly hit him very hard!"

“Seriously, what are you talking about Kiri?” Mina looked to Kirishima, her own confusion ripe and obvious. Shouto was only feeling worse.

“After the first day of camp, the forest trek, I saw him in the baths by the hot springs, he had all these... bruises and marks down his back, and his shoulders, neck. I’m pretty sure they went across his ribs too.”

Whatever anger and resentment was in their eyes dulled a fraction before flaring up again.

“Tch. He probably got into a fight he couldn’t win before Camp started. Or got pummelled by Pixie-Bob’s Mud-beasts when he ran off on his own. Just like Ojirou said, I only messed with him. Didn’t even touch him once.” Uraraka lamented.

“So none of you will admit to attacking him?!”

Kirishima seemed about to snap. Todoroki only surveyed his classmates, looking for anyone who might be lying. He was certain it wasn’t him, he’s pretty sure he’d remember pummelling the living daylight of out Bakugou. And if the rest of the class really were telling the truth...

“Then who did it?”

Silence fell and Shouto’s mind raced once more.

...

...

...

Bakugou couldn't be like him, he wasn't like him. Bakugou wasn't like him... was he?

The Lodge was burning. Blue flames licking and reaching higher and higher as the structure began to crumble and melt under the extreme

temperatures. Eijirou couldn't take his eyes off it. When the entrance caved in and he noticed Bakugou hadn't followed he'd panicked. Vlad King was adamant they stay indoors, at least he had been until the fire crept up on them. The next thing he knew he was being ushered outdoors, into fresh, humid summer air and away from one danger towards another.

It was so fast, everything was over in flash. He blinked and several Pro's were there. Another blink that he and his classmates were being escorted into the backs of Ambulances and taken to the nearest Hospital.

Everything was a blur. From the moment they arrived, even while being questioned and checked over, Eijirou didn't really feel present. He kept expecting to see Bakugou appear, for some Officer or Pro to show up with the angry blond in tow, cursing about how he could take on all the Villains. But it never happened.

Days passed with no news.

Eijirou didn't really feel like himself again until the news that Midoriya was finally awake reached his ears, and even then he didn't feel all that much better. Even having the knowledge that Bakugou had tormented and bullied Midoriya for over a decade, it was clear the Greenette still held the explosive blond in a high regard. Why? He didn't know, but if Midoriya, one of the most kind and selfless people he knew, thought Bakugou was worth being kind too, then why weren't the rest of them? All Eijirou wanted to know now is how they're going to explain it all to Midoriya... that they, hopeful future Hero's, had probably assisted indirectly in the events that lead to whatever had happened to Bakugou. How were they supposed to tell Midoriya that Bakugou was gone? That the Villain's had likely succeeded in their task?

They weren't going to apparently.

Everyone had at some point decided that keeping Midoriya out of the loop, even now, was the best way to go about things. Eijirou couldn't stand for it any longer. The second he saw a chance, an opening to upset the fragile status quo everyone had been balancing since Todoroki first disclosed Bakugou's dark past to them, he snatched it.

We don't know where he is.

It was simple, to the point. How could anyone argue with that? Apparently it was going to take a bit more than simply sparking the

wildfire in Midoriya's mind.

Bakugou is responsible for the attack on camp.

Eijirou had felt sickened by the lies at camp. Hearing Mina outright fib to their teacher and about something so serious was horrible. But this? Having to listen to Todoroki literally incriminate Bakugou and vilify him completely and have no one say a thing to argue with it... it was beyond heart-breaking. He'd let it get too far, they'd all let it go too far.

Eijirou couldn't sit still. After hearing most of his fellow classmates all but condemn Bakugou for some mistakes and their own assumptions he couldn't stand to be around them any longer. Not to mention them denying being the ones to hurt him. He'd seen the chat, he had the screenshots to prove it too!

Just thinking about that day after Bakugou exploded in Homeroom sent waves of nausea through him. The day he'd been added to a group chat titled [*Operation; Bakugone!*]. Reading as Uraraka and Mina took the helm, conjuring up the best ways to get Bakugou in trouble and make it seem like it was all his fault.

[PINKY] There's only so many more chances Sensei will give Bakugou before he gets expelled for good, right? So, If we can just get him really worked up he's bound to snap at us!

[URAVITY] Yes! Yes! Yes! We can keep him away from Deku-kun forever that way!

[CELLOPHANE] Guys he really hates people getting in his way, or interrupting him. At camp we can fuck with him until he blows up! Aizawa is bound to make him sit out at least!

[CHARGEOLT] You think if i zapped him we could get him to explode so much he'd get sent home early too?!

Recounting the rest of the horrid conversations would be redundant at this point and Eijirou didn't want to hear the words repeated anymore than they already had been.

He stormed off, trying his hardest not to snap and lose his temper completely. He didn't want to do something he knew he would regret in the heat of moment, an issue he's now sure Bakugou was always battling with. It should have been obvious to them that provoking him was only going to make things worse, especially when they were

getting the responses the wanted right away.

But no, they'd all perched on the metaphorical high horse that was Heroism and decided they were the best people to teach him a lesson. It had started off innocently enough. Eijirou had really only felt anger and annoyance at Bakugou for that first day right up until he saw the absolute terror on his friends face when Todoroki cornered him in Homeroom. A sight he never wanted to see ever again. Fear and Bakugou just didn't compute in his head. He had thought, at first, that seeing Bakugou put in his place and getting it return would make him realize how bad the things he was doing were. It took him all too long to realize Bakugou already knew that.

Eijirou didn't notice at first, was too caught up in the excitement with everyone else, but not once did Bakugou try and deny what he'd done. He'd admitted it with a relaxed air about him that was very easy to mistake for aloofness. Now, to Eijirou at least, it was all too obvious that Bakugou was aware of how bad it sounded, of how they would take it. He didn't make any excuses, just plainly admitted that he'd bullied Midoriya, that he'd incited suicide and that everything Todoroki had shared with them was the truth. How anyone could do such things to Midoriya of all people was beyond him, but even the worst of the worst have their reasons and now he was regretting not trying harder to hear Bakugou out when he could.

He remembered too late sitting in an anti-bullying class in junior high. The instructor telling them all something very important that they should commit to memory. Something he had evidently forgotten.

Bully's typically do what they do in an attempt to feel strong, because someone or something in their own life is hurting them or out of their control. It might be something as trivial as jealousy, or more serious, perhaps they're being bullied themselves. One thing you need to remember, is that even bully's are people. Just like you and me, they make mistakes. Sometimes all they need is a little help.

He should have listened that afternoon, after lunch, when Bakugou approached him clearly intent on resolving things. His anger at the blond had been too fresh, and as unmanly as it was he felt a little vindicated when Mina stepped between them and Bakugou was left to go back his desk alone. Trying to mend the bridges he'd burned himself this long after that had been a fool's errand. But having Bakugou so furiously and desperately reject him only renewed his determination to fix what he'd broken. It had taken literal weeks to get Bakugou to open up to him even a little the first time round, he

had a feeling it would be even harder now.

A knock on the stall door jolted him from his pondering. His movement conjuring the motion sensor lights in the toilet back to life.

“Kirishima?”

Tokoyami?

Eijirou flushed out of habit and opened the door to see his classmate, looking as tired and shaken as they all were, regarding him with deep concern. He nodded at him and walked to the sinks to wash his hands, perhaps a little too thoroughly but he needed the distraction. Needed to be active. Not to mention the dirt and soot under his nails was starting to bug him.

“You were in there for a long time.” Tokoyami said after a while. “You never struck me as someone who enjoys revelling in the dark alone.”

Eijirou let himself chuckle lightly, he really wasn’t the type but he wasn’t really feeling himself after what he could only call a glorified failure of a summer camp. His attempts to get through to his other spiteful classmates only enraged him and rage wasn’t something he was overly familiar with.

“You are concerned about our missing volatile classmate?”

“That obvious?” Eijirou scoffed, gripping the edge of the sink, not even aware his Quirk was activating, the ceramic starting to crack under his iron grip. “I just hate that no one is doing anything about the fact he’s missing! He could be stuck in that forest somewhere, injured or... or worse... I know he’d hate me or anyone fussing over him but I am worried. He didn’t look so great that last night. He hasn’t been himself since all this crap started.”

“He isn’t in the forest.” Tokoyami said matter-of-factly, looking at him via his reflection in the mirror. Eijirou blinked and stared straight back before turning to face him proper.

“What?”

“When the Villain’s had me in that... suspended animation... I could still hear them, only just it was muffled. When Midoriya and the others cornered him, they let me go with little fighting.”

Eijirou felt like he should be able to put two and two together, like he

should be able to guess what words weren't being spoken. But his head was fried. Between worrying about his own failure, Bakugou's well-being and how he can even begin to making the rest of the class see some sense, he had no braincells left to read between any lines. He needed people to be direct with him. Considering the usual affluent language Tokoyami uses he supposes this is as close as he'll get without asking. So he asks.

"What are you saying?"

Tokoyami look down at his feet and then back at him. "The Villains were successful in their objective to take him. Like I said, I could hear them. They were okay with letting me go once they learned they had Bakugou secured."

Eijirou felt a pit in his stomach open rapidly and it was taking all his effort to not throw up.

"So the League have him?" he clenched his hardened fists, feeling the tell-tale tension in his muscles that always came when he used his Hardening. He'd had a feeling but he was still hopeful it wouldn't be true. "They've had him for days and..."

"I did tell the Police and the Heroes before we were brought here. Though they don't seem intent on taking me seriously."

Eijirou had a feeling he knew why. Regardless of whether Tokoyami told them days ago or just now during his official interview, he knew the others would have been asked the same questions. They were all aware Bakugou was missing and he knew a lot of them would rather he stay that way. He was banking on Mina and Hagakure recounting the events of camp whether they were lies or not. But that didn't sit right with him at the same time. They may have it out for Bakugou, they may have stooped to lying to their teacher in their efforts to have Midoriya rid of him for good but he doubted aspiring Heroes would ever lie to the police or another Pro, especially about something so sensitive and dangerous. It was a clear obstruction of justice, something that could cost them the title of Hero in future.

The only other idea in his head was that all the bad press that had been building up since the Sports Festival was finally rearing its head. The whole of Japan had seemed to have it out for Bakugou in the days and weeks following that mess of a final and award ceremony. He had tried to avoid the tabloids and clickbait news articles for the sake of his friend, but every now and then one would slip through on the

Hero networks. The things they said were not nice. He could probably attribute most of the classes determination in backing up the idea he was a Villain coming from the few articles he'd read. The most recent being published just before camp, an article slandering him once more and calling him less human and more beast. A Villain in the making.

"They aren't going to do anything about it? Are they?"

Tokoyami's own Quirk, Dark Shadow had made an appearance at some point, the bird shaped shadow being looking just as angry and concerned as his user counterpart. Tokoyami shook his head.

"They seemed intent on the idea that he was involved somehow. Todoroki did say he was familiar with the Villain that attacked them at the Lodge?"

"The Villain knew him, but Bakugou didn't know the Villain. He looked, scared if I had to be honest. Terrified... I shouldn't have left him out there alone."

"There has to be something we can do."

Tokoyami was the last person he expected to hear saying that. Hearing Dark Shadow say it even more. But the two were connected and reflected each other in their actions and words. According to Tokoyami Dark Shadow was more prone to speaking the things he was less sure of.

"Momo said she got a tracker on the Nomu, but I doubt she'd make a copy of the device for us... she hates Bakugou as much as most of the class."

Tokoyami sighed, looking defeated.

"Midoriya would want to help him. Maybe he can get through to her?"

It was Eijirou's turn to sigh, "They're hellbent on keeping him out of it. They don't want him getting hurt on account of Bakugou."

"So what else is there?"

Eijirou was at a loss and was feeling more hopeless with every passing second. The silence seemed to be enough to communicate to Tokoyami and Dark Shadow that there was nothing they could do.

Together they finally left the toilets and strolled downtrodden and exhausted back to the waiting area. Majority of the class were gone, some currently being escorted out the doors by their parents and police. Of course it wasn't surprising. Aizawa had said anyone who didn't need to be in the hospital had to go home. Perhaps now that Midoriya was awake he was reinforcing that. It only made sense. They were only taking up beds in the hospital that could be used for someone actually in need. They had to be somewhere safe and at home they would stay alert and on guard. Not that it really mattered if the Villains already had what they wanted.

Tokoyami headed towards Midoriya's room and Eijirou wanted to follow but seeing his own mother there by the entrance to the ward made him feel even worse about how helpless and guilty he was. He felt somewhat responsible for whatever fate had befallen his friend. And he didn't want to leave yet, he wanted to talk to Midoriya some more, to try and explain what happened at camp and maybe gain some ground to fixing the things he'd messed up. Sure it was selfish of him. It was all rooted in his desire to rid himself of the twisting nausea that was festering in his chest but he's pretty sure sooner or later he would have seen the wrong in his and his classmates actions even without the dread he was feeling now. He hopes.

He watched his mum scan the waiting room, looking around frantically for him as he tried to put on a brave face for her.

"Mom!" he unashamedly shouted picking up his pace as he couldn't contain his urge to run to her. He collided with her not long after, swinging his arms around her and breathing in her sweet and salty smell. Her arms were quick to pull him even closer, fingers curling in his hair and clutching him as if he might disappear.

"I was so worried when I got the call!" she gasps, pulling him back to plaster his faces with wet kisses, taking the time in between to check him over. "You're okay? You didn't get hurt?"

"I'm fine mom. I wasn't near any of the fighting..."

His mom continues to stroke his hair back, the bandana he'd been wearing long gone. Her concern was bleeding through uncontrollably, taking in every tiny little detail because she knows him so well. She and his Ma had been taking account of every little part of him since the day he was born.

"Talk to me baby boy what's wrong?"

He can't help that the pathetic façade he was trying to keep up crumbles instantly. It's the last thing he wants to happen in front of her but he's supposed to be a Hero in training and a Hero is the farthest from how he feels right now. He doesn't want to talk about it here, not where so many people might be against him.

"Is Ma here too?"

She frowns, he knows she can see straight through him and understands somehow what he's not saying what he really wants to say.

"No, she's still at home. They advised only one parent to come to... reduce risks."

In case the league was still looking for them, but why they'd want him he couldn't fathom. And after what Tokoyami shared he was certain whatever the League had wanted with any of them not including Bakugou wasn't an issue.

"Let's get you signed out yeah, get home and-"

"Can we stay... just a bit longer? My friend... he's... I have to tell him something."

His mom looks even more concerned and looks back at the officer guarding the door to the wing the heroes were taking up. The Officer who was clearly eavesdropping answers with a silent shake of his head.

"They said I have to be in and out," she checked her watch, "But I have the sudden urge to use the toilet."

His mother looked at him with a sharp, toothy grin, one that so many people said was the same as his own smile. He couldn't imagine not having either of his parents there to support him, especially in a time like this. She leans in with another hug, whispering in his ear. "10 minutes. Then we go. Agreed?"

He nods and immediately runs off towards Midoriya's room. The Greenette had always erred on Bakugou's positive aspects maybe together they'd be able to come up with something to kickstart this new operation. In Opposition of *Operation;Bakugone* he was going to do everything in his power to make sure it never happened.

Chapter End Notes

Really hope that was worth the wait! I was going to include a few other POV's but decided they would make more sense if they came later.

As I said next chapter in the next few days, only a few minor edits to make :)

Follow on Twitter or updates between... updates I guess :D
<https://twitter.com/SuperiorKats>

You call this a Rescue?!

Chapter Summary

Izuku plans and Katsuki tries to find a reason not give up.

Chapter Notes

It is finally here! January sucked but I'm finally feeling good enough to post this :) This is a massive chapter and I was debating splitting it in two but decided against it, so enjoy 23k + of what is mostly Katsuki having an early midlife crisis, or maybe several at once.

Chapter Warnings;

Canon typical violence, reference to bullying, reference to non-consensual touching (v brief), child-abuse, gaslighting, self-deprecation, suicidal ideation, vomiting.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Izuku watched with rapt attention as the Nurse finished wrapping up this battered arms in much lighter and more breathable bandages. With the bulky casts gone Izuku had hoped he'd feel lighter, or at the least a little bit relieved. But no, there was still a heavy weight nestled in his chest, thick, immovable and growing heavier.

The Nurse was rambling on about nothing and everything. The weather, what he'd had for lunch, how the coffee in the cafeteria wasn't actually as bad as everyone says. Pointless, meaningless things that were meant to fill the void, to distract from the shock and turmoil going on, but mostly to divert from the reality that was still settling in. The words were nothing but white noise. A fuzzy blur that Izuku couldn't focus on but was distinctly aware of. With Todoroki's declaration still ringing loud in his ears it was hard to hear anything but his own flustered thoughts.

Bakugou is responsible for the attack on camp.

The phrase, the tone it was said in... it was sour, bitter and undigestible.

Bakugou? Responsible? Attack?

The words, the order, the meaning behind them... it didn't make any sense to him. Kacchan would never, ever, in a million years ever stoop so low as to associate with Villains. Never! Izuku shook his head hard, as if doing so could dispel the thoughts but they clung tightly to his brain matter and he only succeeded in startling his company. The attending Nurse quickly excused himself telling him to stay put and that someone would be along to let him know if he could leave or not. Izuku didn't care to thank him for his work. He was too flustered, his mind a mire of contradicting feelings. No matter how many times he ran through everything, at the end of it he just couldn't bring himself to accept that Kacchan would ever plan or aid anything like this.

Izuku had known Kacchan close to his entire life. Through all the years, the good and the bad, Kacchan had only ever had one goal in mind. To be a Hero. And not just any Hero, Kacchan was going to be the best Hero. Number One. Better than All Might himself! For as long as he could remember Kacchan would always shout it loud and clear. Nothing could swerve him from that goal.

Kacchan had always possessed this fundamental need to be absolute best. To exceed his own limitations and go fields beyond what was expected of him. The desire had only grown as Kacchan grew, and though the time when Izuku was a part of that dream was long gone, he knew for a fact that Kacchan still held that aim close to his heart. It was so melded to his core, so woven into his very being, that even entertaining the idea of Kacchan doing anything other was impossible.

Izuku knew better than most what Kacchan was capable of. Those same explosions he watched bloom to life in awe had been the source of many tears and pain, though looking back most could have been avoided had Izuku himself had just backed down when asked. Everybody seemed so hyper focused on the bad, on how destructive Kacchan was. With a Quirk called Explosion how could he not be capable of immense destruction? But Izuku knew that Kacchan had countless other ways of using his Quirk; numerous moves and techniques that didn't involve causing hurt. Ways to use what could be a weapon for good. Kacchan might be abrupt and intense, so driven that he gets easily blinded by his ambition, but there are the rare moments of serenity that prove to Izuku beyond a doubt that Kacchan is simply trying to be his best self. Short, fleeting moments that

remind him of when they had nothing to worry about. Calm moments where he just... was. Where there was no need to win, or to be the best. No need to impress anyone or surpass anyone. Passing seconds where they were alone and just existing.

These moments didn't happen often. Even less so nowadays. The quiet moment they'd shared just before leaving for camp, when Kacchan had agreed to spar and train with him, that had been the first true peaceful moment in what felt like years. Just standing there in the humid morning air, the summer heat bringing a subtle glow to their cheeks. During those scarce experiences he felt like a young kid again; blinded and in awe of how amazing Kacchan was. Amazed at how he was able to hold that drive so firmly for so long. He'd always succeed, even if it meant leaving everyone else, and Izuku, behind.

So Izuku imagines his sour mood should be understandable. Waking to hear the accusation that his own personal Hero, and symbol of victory since forever (second only to All Might!), was affiliating with the League of Villains *and* responsible for the attack on their summer camp... it just wasn't remotely fathomable. Izuku couldn't accept it. Wouldn't! It just wasn't the Kacchan he knew.

Neither was the Kacchan who lashed out in class. Everything going on lately was nothing like his Kacchan. It didn't make sense. None of it! Half of the puzzle pieces weren't lining up and the other half missing. Nevermind the fact he was still refusing to use some the more obvious fitting pieces, regardless of much it made sense he refused to think the worst of his classmates just yet. They were probably just scared, in shock. It made sense to jump to conclusions with things like this.

It didn't explain everything though...

Izuku huffed, leaning back against the flat lifeless pillows. He didn't have to be a genius to figure out his classmates weren't going to be too interested in helping him help Kacchan. The way most of them had scattered the second the opportunity arose told him quite clearly that their help was likely off the table. That of course left him with very few options, next to none actually. Normally his mind would be racing with ideas but he was drawing a blank now. All he knew was that if no one was going to look out for Kacchan, it was going to be up to him. Kacchan might not like it but he wasn't exactly in a position to argue about it. He childhood friend may still not be willing to take his hand, but Izuku was sure as hell going to try.

Worst case scenario was that no one, not even the Pros were

concerned. It wasn't likely that the Heroes would disregard him like that, Izuku was simply entertaining that idea based on the accusations he'd heard. Preparing for every possibility was the only thing he could do right now, short of dashing out the door still in his hospital garb.

Izuku fidgeted, unable to sit still as he waited for the go ahead to leave. He had no idea what his plan was, or what he could even hope to achieve by himself once he did get out but he supposed the sooner he got started the sooner he could see Kacchan again. The urge to just check himself out was so strong that he was halfway out of the bed when the door was opening yet again.

He didn't even try to suppress the annoyed huff he made at the sound of the track scraping as his visitor opened the door. He assumed it was the Nurse coming to tell him off yet again for being so reckless and how he should ensure to avoid such dangers in future if he wanted to keep his arms. He hadn't expected to hear a more familiar voice.

"Midoriya? You okay dude?"

He looked up to meet the unsure, yet determined, gaze of both Kirishima (whom he'd sort of expected) and Tokoyami (whom he hadn't expected at all). The two of them stepped urgently into the room, closing the door behind them and regarded him with an air of intense quiet that Izuku couldn't fully comprehend. It was almost like the atmosphere before a sparring session, but not quite. Like they were gearing up for something waiting for something to happen. As annoyed at his classmates as he was, Kirishima had been the only one to answer him with little hesitation and he was closest to Kacchan (even if he had been distant of late). Tokoyami... Izuku wasn't sure what to think, he barely knew him but perhaps he was of the same mind as Kirishima, if he was here they had to have agreed on something.

Izuku could say he was almost glad to see them, that is if they weren't just here to delay him or talk him out of acting. As his mind rushed through the possibilities in a last ditch attempt at clutching onto hope he didn't hesitate to speak.

"I'm going to go after Kacchan. Don't even try to convince me now to! I *know* he isn't involved with the League. It's hard to explain, but... I just *know* he'd never doing something like this. Kacchan's not that kind of person. He's-"

"It's alright Midoriya." Tokoyami interrupted his inevitable rambling

before it really had a chance to take off, the calm tone of his voice reassuring enough persuade Izuku to not carry on just yet to take a second to breath.

Izuku just had so much to say he wanted to say that his mouth couldn't quite keep up sometimes; especially when it came to Kacchan. He supposed he should give them a chance to speak too.

From the deepest depths of his guts, Izuku hoped these two had good intentions. That they weren't intent on stopping what he knew he had to do, though he supposes depending on perspective, talking him out of it could be viewed as a good intention. Maybe he could convince them otherwise. Convince them that helping him get Kacchan was worth it.

"We *do* believe you Midoriya." Tokoyami said firmly, interrupting him once more. Izuku hadn't even noticed he'd been muttering out loud. This is what happens when Kacchan isn't around to stop him huh? "You don't have to explain anything. We want to help."

They sat in silence as the words sunk in.

Izuku stared blankly at Tokoyami, and then at Kirishima who nodded to confirm what he'd just heard. Still he wasn't quite sure he trusted his ears right now. What if he was just hearing what he wanted to hear? The bandages on his head weren't there for fun, though he's pretty sure the Nurse would have told him if he had a concussion or anything like that. Auditory hallucinations were a thing, but he's certain the Nurse would have warned him about that too.

Izuku looked back and forth between the two. Jaw bobbing open and closed as he tried to form something coherent as his mind picked up the pace again. Something that wasn't just screaming *'whatarewewaitingfor?comeonletsgonow!'* and running out of the room. He just couldn't quite let himself believe it. From how difficult everyone was being earlier, he would had thought more work would have been needed to lay out a plan of action before anyone would remotely consider being on his side. The way the class had been ignoring Kacchan, being deliberately confrontational towards him... Izuku hadn't had held much hope. This, however, was a pleasant turn of events.

"Y-you do? You want to help me? You want to help me go after Kacchan?"

Kirishima stepped forward, the familiar smashing of hardened fists

sending small sparks flying as he nodded. “Yeah! We were coming to ask you if you’d help us actually!”

The show of bravado ended with an awkward chuckle. Kirishima’s hands unhardening, one rising to rub tentatively at the back of his neck. A nervous tick Izuku had noted all they way back during their first week of classes. A clear sign that he wasn’t exactly sure of himself.

“What do you need my help with?” he asked, more shocked than anything that they’d need him and not the other way around.

Kirishima took a step closer, that determined façade coming back. “Right. So, at this point we’ll say we know Bakugou has been kidnapped by the League. We also know that Momo was able to get a tracker on the Nomu they used. If we want even a chance of finding Bakugou...”

“We need the tracker.”

“Exactly! Without it I’ve got no clue where to even start looking!”

Kirishima seemed breathless, like just standing still to explain this was taking it out of him. Honestly though Izuku felt the same. Just listening had left him with an uncomfortable rush of relief mixing with an anxious pit of procrastination. Having a possible lead, a path to follow, it was just what they needed. The sure chance to finally act breath-taking to the point he couldn’t let himself sit any longer. Izuku wanted to be gone hours ago and already bringing Kacchan home. Every second spent sitting here talking and considering ‘what-if’s’ was another second Kacchan spent in the hands of Villain’s.

His visitors stood a little stunned by his sudden burst of energy as he all but jumped from the bed.

“So you guys go get a copy of the tracker while I check myself out and we can go right now! We can get Kacchan back!”

Izuku was rummaging through what was left of his belongings from camp, left for him by who knows who, he’d only just noticed it was sitting there by the foot of the bed. Snatching the bare bones of an outfit, and his very battered phone, he slipped into the shower room to change as the others shifted behind him. He left the door open a crack so they could still talk.

“You see, that’s the thing. Uh, Momo *probably* won’t give *me* copy. Or

even Tokoyami. But, if you were to ask her, she might be more inclined to make another one. You know since it's you?"

"I think perhaps she'll be even less cooperative since it's Midoriya."

All three of them were equally surprised by the sudden appearance of Dark Shadow, even Tokoyami who only frowned at the downer mood his own Quirk had fuelled. Izuku peeked his head out and stared at Dark Shadow, the small timid form a world away from the massive beast that had rampaged through the forest just a few days ago. If not for the fire raging and the sheer luck they had directing him towards it, they'd have had a lot worse to worry about than just Villains and Nomu's.

Izuku stopped himself from asking why the Shadowy being would presume such a thing. Didn't have to ask. With how *protective* everyone had been of late, it was too far of a stretch to think they would stop him from doing this. Heck, crossing the street had been a challenge with them over the break, voluntarily marching head first into a Villain's hideout and explicitly asking for their help to do it? That was going to be impossible!

"Well, there's only one way to find out." Izuku muttered slipping a probably dirty t-shirt over his head. Blind optimism, that was they way to go, it always worked right? At least that's what his mom always said. "I'll ask her. The worst she can say is no after all."

"Y-yeah, I guess." Kirishima chuckled. "So, we get a copy of the tracker and go from there. Ultimately we get Bakugou back. Good plan..."

Their discussion fizzled out, none of them clearly willing to consider what they'd have to do if Momo refused his request.

Silence, and shuffling was all he heard as Izuku stared daggers into the wall ahead of him while he finished up getting dressed. If they weren't going to talk about it then it would be up to him right? Though he wasn't sure how he would do that without snapping at them. Every time he thought about what Todoroki said, about the incident at camp, in homeroom, the gym... he felt the fury in him building. But there wasn't time for that now. They had to reach some understanding at the very least.

He grabbed his phone and stepped out, taking the time to get a good look at the two of his would-be accomplices. They both looked exhausted, still wearing the same clothes they'd fought for their lives

in. They were trying at the very least, so he could look past his frustrations for now. Only for now.

“Look, if we’re going to do this, I want to know what’s going on. I want to know that you’ll tell me *everything*. Why everyone’s being so mean to Kacchan, the point behind it all. And please don’t lie to me. I’m tired of being lied to. I don’t need to be coddled, I’m not going to break over this. You don’t have to tell me right now, we don’t have the time if we want to have any chance of success. But just promise you’ll tell me. Or tell me something... I need to know I can trust you two.”

Kirishima’s lips parted, then he faltered, seeming to think twice about what he was going to say most likely. Or perhaps more about how to say it. Izuku had no clue how long this thing with Kacchan had been going on, he only knows that after the end of term exams things changed for the absolute worst. It could have been happening since the very start of the year. And it hadn’t gotten so bad now that that none of his classmates cared at all what could be happening to him.

“It would be easier to show you, I was going to show Aizawa too but my phone’s kinda busted and needs fixed. There’s this group chat that....” Kirishima started.

And abruptly stopped as once again the door was opening. Izuku was milliseconds from tearing the damn off its hinges when he realised who it was.

Aizawa-sensei slipped the door open pausing with a face of indifference, like he’d almost expected to see Izuku standing there right by the door and about to leave. Izuku felt like he’d be caught in the act of something illegal, opposed to just plotting a rescue with his friends.

“Sensei?!” Izuku bowed his head taking a small step back as Aizawa strolled in.

They all looked as stunned as the other. Izuku glanced at Kirishima. Sending a look that he hoped was projecting a silent plea. *Don’t tell him anything. Not yet at least.*

The redhead looked even more at odds with himself now, no doubt battling with the urge to tell his Sensei everything. But whatever else he wanted to say would *really* have to wait now. If there was one person who’d make sure the lot of them went nowhere it was Aizawa. Thankfully Kirishima seemed to understand that, reluctantly nodding and deflating.

Izuku turned back to facing his Sensei, finding it difficult to hold the feeling of unbridled fury burning in his gut just thinking about what he'd learned. A group chat? His classmates had been actively planning to sabotage Kacchan? It made him feel sick to even consider them friends right now. Still a part of him was hoping, praying, that there was some other unknown variable missing from the explanation. Some other reason, some horrid thing that Kacchan had done that might convince Izuku too that there was nothing good in him. He very much doubted it though. They'd come this far and Izuku still believed in him, finding something now that would change that was nigh impossible.

He was getting Kacchan back and after that he was going to raise hell. He'd get the answers he needed and even if he hated it he'd bring the truth to light. Even if Kacchan didn't want *his* help specifically he'd have to make do. So long as they don't use their Quirks or break any laws they'd be fine. In and out. Simple.

The three of them were all agreed and there wasn't any time for argument if they weren't anyway. If any problems arose then Izuku would leave them behind. He would explain as much, but with their Sensei standing stoically before them he couldn't. Izuku regarded the man, noticing how there was a slight sway in his posture as he stood.

Their teacher had definitely looked worse following the USJ but even now Izuku could see the Pro was not in top form. Whether that was due the situation or other factors, like the injury he was no doubt still recovering from, Izuku didn't know. It was probably both. Aizawa-sensei regarded them each in turn with suspicious and questioning eyes that where so tired they looked about ready to close.

Whatever thoughts where whirring in Aizawa's head went unspoken when a second person stepped up to the door behind him. Izuku recognised her immediately. Kirishima's mother, the same one who'd dropped him off just a few days ago with a happy smile. She looked tired, exhausted and he really didn't have to wonder why. Her gaze washed over them before landing on her son, a tense smile playing on her lips. "Come on Eiji, time to go."

The redhead gave him one last forlorn look before Aizawa was hurrying him along with an impatient stare. Acquiescing Kirishima bade them farewell, taking slow painful steps as if it would change anything. They left quietly and without another word, Tokoyami took his leave too making sure to throw another almost hopeless look over his shoulder at him.

Izuku had to wonder in their little rescue team was still a thing now. Without them, and without even a sniff of a solid plan, Izuku couldn't fathom being able to do this alone, having said that though he was still going to try.

He had hope, and right now that's really all he had.

"Where exactly where you going Midoriya?"

The question startled him, his head too deep into thinking about Kacchan and the horrible things the League might be planning to do, might have already done. He prayed that Kacchan was still fighting back in his own very Kacchan way.

He stared at his Sensei, a little confused at first until the Pro gestured to the fact he was fully dressed and not in a hospital gown.

"Oh, uh, I was... going to... visit Momo?" he cursed himself for making it sound like a question, but for some reason that's how it came out.

"You got dressed to go down the hall?"

When put like that, yeah it sounded like overkill, but deep down he knew his Sensei knew what he was trying to do. There wasn't another second of silence before Midoriya's mouth was running a mile a minute. If all else failed he could at least tire Aizawa into telling him something, right?

"Sensei, Kacchan... he's... I want to help! If the Pro's are doing something, *anything*, I want to do something too. I know Kacchan and I are always at each other's throats, but..." he couldn't hold himself in check, he needed to know if his teacher was thinking the same as his classmates, the same as Todoroki, "Do... do they really think Kacchan helped them? That he planned the attack with the League? Do they seriously think he's with them?"

The look on Aizawa's face was stunned morphing from a muted shock to as just as muted anger, "Hold on, who told you that?"

Izuku had the accusations on the tip of his tongue, but he knew it would be more than hypocritical of himself to tell Aizawa all his worries about the class after just telling Kirishima not to say a word. Not to mention the Pro was likely stressed enough, to the point he was sleeping even less than normal, if at all. Still, he couldn't exactly leave his teacher in limbo after suggesting something like that.

“I overheard some people... and a few of the class... they said Kacchan knew the Villains. That they were working together. But it’s not true. I can’t be! Kacchan would never do something like that! They seriously don’t believe that do they?”

Izuku could feel his chest heaving, as he gasped for air. Aizawa gently took him by the shoulders, the light grip grounding and calming in an odd way despite the fact he was being moved back towards the bed, further away from Kacchan. “Calm down, problem child. Now, I highly doubt he was involved, and though I admire the tenacity you won’t be going anywhere except home, the same as everyone else. The Pro’s *are* dealing with it. All Might is heading an op in retaliation. If you can trust anyone to save Bakugou back it’s All Might. Right?”

The look on his Sensei’s face told Izuku the Hero was trying to convince himself as much as his student. He wondered if Aizawa was using his well-known admiration of All Might to pacify him, in this case he wouldn’t put it past him with all the previous deception but this time it felt more serious, more real. Aizawa wouldn’t just say something without a little bit of backing to it. Not to mention his Sensei was likely aiming to not have any more students to worry about. Izuku felt only a little bad that he’d have to disappoint his Sensei this time.

As bad as he felt, he noticed a little bit of that weight lift off his shoulders. If All Might was involved that meant he should trust it would be done the right way. But he knew something few others did. That All Might’s time was getting less and less. This plan, their mission whatever it was, would need to be decisive and direct. A single move that finished the fight as quickly as possible. Izuku trusted him, but what if it wasn’t enough?

At the USJ All Might had barely managed to fight off that Nomu, without their help, what if the League had more? More than the one they saw at camp? He’d need all the help he could get and there was no way Izuku was going to watch it unfurl from the side-lines, hiding behind a TV screen while his Hero and Childhood friend were in the thick of it. Short of tying him to the bed right now there was nothing that could convince him to stay.

Unless he saw it happen with his own two eyes, Izuku wasn’t going to believe anything anyone told him.

Glancing at the clock hanging above the bed, showed it was after midnight now. That made it more than four days. Four long days since

they learned Kacchan had vanished. He's certain somewhere in his many notebooks, from one time or another when he'd gotten side-tracked doing research for Hero class, there was the statistics that showed kidnapping victims who aren't found or at the very least located within the first 48 hours of being abducted are never found. It was horrible to think about. How someone's life relied on a very small window of opportunity. But this was Kacchan, he wasn't a victim, Izuku had to believe he was giving the Villain's hell. Playing the game and winning the battle like always. Not giving up was one of Kacchan's specialties and after all the years Izuku had come to rely on Kacchan's resilience.

He never did answer his Sensei's question. Simply sat there looking down at his clenched, bandaged fists as he conjured all the things he need to win this fight out of sheer will and stubbornness. Of course that was beyond optimistic. He'd have to get his hands dirty one way or another. Perhaps, if he could get his Sensei to tell him a little bit more...

"What are they actually doing about it Sensei? Are they actually trying to help Kacchan? Or are they just after the League? Why are they waiting so long to act?" he made sure he sounded as doubtful as he could. It's not that he didn't have faith in the Pro's, he'd lived his whole life looking up to them, wanting nothing more than to be just like them. But with the whole cloak and dagger atmosphere hovering among class 1-A he couldn't help but doubt everything right now. If this mission turned out to be just an offensive on the League and not a focused rescue for Kacchan then he'd rather be there to let them know just how big of a mistake that was.

Aizawa sighed roughly, shoulders visibly sagging. "Yes they are doing something about it. For obvious reasons I can't give you any details. As for why they're taking so long to get this together? I don't know, but they are going to get him back. There'll be hell to pay if they don't, that I can promise you, Midoriya."

Izuku watched as his Sensei's stubbled jaw clenched, like he wanted to say more, like he was angry about it. It wasn't rare to see the Teacher in a mood, but this was different. The way he'd finished speaking, with a forced certainty, probably trying to convince himself as much as Izuku, that the Heroes had Kacchan's best interests at heart, though he suspected for vastly different reasons.

He nodded in acceptance of his Sensei's words, preferring to keep his thoughts to himself. Aizawa nodded in return.

“Don’t go anywhere. Not until you’re cleared to leave and a police escort has been assigned, understood?”

“Not even to see Momo?”

“Fine, but you are not to leave this ward Midoriya.” Aizawa said firmly.

Again Izuku nodded watching his Sensei leave with a sigh shaking his head, clearly not believing him and more frustrated than before. He could hear his teacher hovering outside the door, the distinct and somehow always very loud sound of a dial tone travelling through. He couldn’t help it, any shred of information was valuable right now. He crept up to the door and strained his ears to hear clearly what was being said.

“Anything?” there was silence followed by an exasperated huff and a mumbled curse. “Keep trying. I don’t care what you have to do, get them here.”

The sound of angry steps grew distant. Whoever Aizawa-sensei was talking, whoever he was talking about... it didn’t instil any confidence or assurance in Izuku. He’d wasted enough time as it was and continuing to ponder answerless questions was only wasting more.

He waited as long as he dared before swiping the door open and leaving the room. His first stop was the reception desk. He took all of a few seconds to check the patient room chart to find the exact one he was aiming for and he was off.

Deciding to check his phone as he went Izuku pulled the device from his pocket. It was on low battery, barely enough for him to get it turned on to check his messages. There were a few from his mother. Likely sharp in contrast to the one she’d sent before they’d left for camp.

Have a fun camp Izuku! Train hard and be good! Love you x

Reading it again brought a small smile to his face, quickly followed by a harsh frown at the thought of how sick she must be with worry. He didn’t bother reading the following messages that he could see from a glance were littered with panicked errors and mistakes. He didn’t hesitate, immediately called her right there and then as he walked towards Momo’s room swerving to avoid any oncoming people.

Hearing her panicked, breathless sobs on the other end nearly broke

him. He stalled in the hallway, wanting nothing more than to run home and see her, to put her at ease and remind her he was fine. A little battered but still in one piece. Then the thought of Kacchan, and the idea that Kacchan might never get to do that ever again if the Pros' messed up... if Izuku didn't try. As much as he wanted to go home, Kacchan was more important.

He listened as she told him she wasn't able to come get him, that she'd already informed his Teachers too. Listened as she told him to stay put and continue to be good for them. It pained him to lie to her, to tell her he was going to do just that when he intended on doing the opposite. But his phone died before he had a chance to explain it that much.

With that out of the way, knowing she was safe, he had the time to focus all his energy on the task at hand. The task being getting that Tracker from Momo.

It was safe to say the girl in question was shocked to see him dressed and requesting the very thing he doubted they'd expected of him. He hadn't spared a second to say hello or even ask if she was alright before leaping into demanding she make him a copy of the tracker. He had to say, though it was unlike him, the rush of adrenaline from just storming in with the intent of getting things done felt incredible.

"I'm sorry? You want me to what?" Momo gawked at him, completely taken aback by the absurdity of his request. Seriously though, they should all really expect this of him at this point.

He held her questioning gaze making sure to hold himself taller too, if he wanted to get this done, he needed to show her he was capable and ready. He couldn't take no for an answer.

She couldn't hold his gaze for long, turning away with a suppressed huff, somehow looking aloof on the small plain cot despite the bandages wrapped around her forehead and the smock clinging to her toned shoulders. Their presence did give him a momentary pang of sympathy for his classmate, but with how urgent it was that he get out of here it didn't leave him with the time to entertain her.

"I need you to make me a copy of the tracker you put on the Nomu!" he repeated bluntly.

With everything going on he wasn't in the mood for giving any longwinded explanations, and while Aizawa had been clear he was to stay put, he wasn't going to settle for sitting around and waiting for

news. He was getting this tracker like Kirishima, Tokoyami and himself had planned and then he was going to check himself out. Even if he had to jump out a window he was leaving here tonight.

With his small team already split, Kirishima gone and Tokoyami who knows where it was all on him now. Momo remained silent, her slim fingers fiddling with the sheets as if trying to come up with some valid reason why she couldn't and shouldn't give him a copy. Izuku kept his gaze fixed on her as she stared back at him wide eyed and concerned. Yet again someone else probably thinking he wasn't strong enough to look out for himself.

"It's important. Momo-chan, please!"

Her gaze turned soft as she remained quiet, unable to argue with him. He was ashamed to say he was banking on this. Momo had always tried to be helpful. No matter the situation, she would always try to be accommodating. Kind even when she was being serious. Watching her excel in the practical's, finally finding her voice on the battlefield, the way she and Todoroki had bested their Sensei together had been awe-inspiring. Her Quirk was fascinating, being able to create almost anything from her own lipids using her knowledge of atomic structures. He would watch her work all day if he had the time. He'd love to get the chance to assess just how identical each item she made was, but not right now, and probably never if his worst assumptions turned out to be true.

Izuku steeled himself, suppressing the urge and want to know more. If she thought the same as the rest of the class... then he needed to be ruthless. He wasn't going to spend time fussing over the Quirk's of people who didn't care about someone important to him.

"I'm sorry Midoriya-kun..."

"Look, I can tell you and the rest of the class have it out for Kacchan right now, for whatever reason. But we're going to be Heroes, we need to be able to look past petty arguments. None of the Heroes are telling us anything and I can't just sit around waiting. I have to know where he is! I have to help Kacchan!"

Momo regarded him once more with disbelief, but really she had no reason to doubt his intentions. He was on his own and he wasn't dumb enough to go on a rescue mission completely unprepared by himself... or was he?

"I'm sorry Midoriya, but I can't. I already exhausted myself making

one for the Pro's. Even if I could, I wouldn't. It would be irresponsible of me. I don't want to be the reason why you get yourself hurt again, least of all because for a brute like Bakugou."

He failed to suppress his frustrated sigh, he didn't want to bother when he thought about the subtext of those words. He hadn't felt this looked down on for a while and the last place he'd expected it was from his classmates. His friends! He was all too aware he was wearing an unsightly glare on his features, if how taken aback Momo looked was anything to go by.

"Midoriya-"

"No. I understand Momo. I won't waste anymore of your time."

Izuku ignored her calls as he all but stormed out of the room, the door closing with a louder than clam bang behind him. He couldn't help it, even at his worst Kacchan had never made him feel this useless.

He hung his head in defeat, feeling the scowl on face deepen before falling into a saddened grimace. Why did they not trust him? And if they didn't, why didn't they just come with him?! They should know he wouldn't just give up if someone said no. He'd go out there and scour the streets high and low if he had to. Of course it would be a million times quicker if he had the tracker. If he just knew where to start, then he'd be spared a world of pain, he'd be better equipped to avoid getting hurt in the first place. The others withholding what they had was only increasing his chances of getting hurt. Couldn't they see that?!

Back outside his own room he paced, not willing to go back to sitting around just yet. But what the hell was he supposed to do now? If his phone had any charge he'd call All Might, pester his mentor into spilling their plan. He's 80% sure that if it was an option it would work. Then again, All Might had been *very* annoyed with him following the whole *Stain* incident, he probably won't appreciate Izuku going out of his way to get into a similar situation with the League, whatever his intentions.

Besides, the less people who knew about his plan the better. No matter how bare bones it was.

"Midoriya."

The speed at which he felt himself turn to face Todoroki was faster than he'd ever felt himself move without One-For-All coursing through

him. It left him dizzy for a spell and did nothing to shake the suspicion he felt now that he knew his friend was still here. The *why* glaringly obvious to him, with the unanimous assumption the whole class had made about his incompetence, why else? Todoroki was only here because Izuku is, because being here put's him in a position to stop whatever foolish plans he's concocting.

Just like Momo, (and everyone else) Todoroki doesn't want him risking himself for Kacchan. Still, Izuku was curious enough to overlook the lingering doubt and apprehension. There was something different in the heterochromatic eyes that faced him. Different from any look he's seen before and all the more daunting for it.

They stared at each other for far too long. So long Izuku could swear he felt the added weight of every wasted second crushing down on him. He couldn't linger. He had to figure things out and then leave without Aizawa-sensei catching him.

"Did you need something, Todoroki-kun?" it felt weird to say that. He could hear the lack of interest in his tone, even as he took steps to put himself closer to the exit.

"I believe this might be of use to you."

Izuku furrowed his brows as he watched his friend burrow into his pocket. The handheld device Todoroki retrieved was slim, black and not unlike a mobile phone, but so vastly different that Izuku almost leapt forward to grab it once he realised what it was, moving without thinking. Only, Todoroki pulled back before he could take it. Izuku's few futile attempts after were no more successful.

He huffed, sensing a bargaining deal coming his way. "I don't have time for games Todoroki-kun. *Kacchan* doesn't have time! What do you want?!"

Todoroki took a quick breath, seeming to gather his thoughts before he spoke, "I believe I know you well enough now that I can guess you'll go searching for Bakugou, even without direction. What I *want* is to make sure you're safe. To make sure you're not putting yourself in needless danger. So, if I can't stop you I'm not letting you go alone."

Beyond explaining his own tragic back story, this was the most Izuku had ever heard Todoroki speak in one breath. As kind and endearing as he's sure that was meant to sound, Izuku couldn't help but pout, annoyed at further hearing how little faith even his closest of friends

seemed to have in him. Still this was progress of sorts. If Izuku wanted a direction to start looking, then he would have to agree to Todoroki accompanying him. Given the circumstances, it really wasn't going to get much better than this.

"You want to help Kacchan?"

"I want to help *you*." He affirmed. Izuku didn't want to read anymore into the blunt tone or the emphasis of '*you*'. That would have to wait, along with all the other answers he was eager to get his hands on.

The Greenette gave a curt nod and that's all Todoroki needed before he handed over the tracker. Izuku squinted at him, still a little disbelieving and suspecting there might be some trick going on. He relented with the device in hand. As his mind was constantly reminding him time was wasting and they'd already wasted too much; four long days, most of which Izuku had spent unconscious. There wasn't time to ponder the reasons behind anything right now.

Focused on the device in his hands and he fiddled with the buttons, praying that he didn't do something stupid like reset the damn thing. It was fairly easy in the end, the screen blinked to life and he stare slack jawed at the small blinking dot on the display.

"Yokohama city... Kamino ward? That- that's a highly populated area, what would Villain's be doing there?"

He was thinking out loud before he could even begin to ponder the reasons. He forced himself to ignore it. Right now he needed to check himself out, the least he could do for his Sensei was not panic him by vanishing without a trace. The sooner they were gone the sooner they could get back with Kacchan.

They walked in tandem, green eyes meeting teal and grey. Meeting Tokoyami by the exit only made him all the more confident that this would work out. All at once a plan was coming together. With Todoroki's ice, Tokoyami's Dark Shadow and his speed and strength, they'd have a good chance. Get there, get Kacchan, get out.

"Let's go get Kacchan." Izuku said, not sparing another second before practically running off.

With Todoroki and Tokoyami hot on his heels, he couldn't help but feel that little bundle of hope blooming. Maybe, maybe this would start the path to making everything right again.

Maybe.

Hang in there Kacchan, help is coming...

The Villains are looking for someone called Kacchan! Kacchan should avoid fighting and get to safety!

Mandalay had been the one to literally beam the words into his head, but it was Deku's whiney voice that played on loop. Always fucking Deku, with his Kacchan this and Kacchan that, and yet right now Katsuki would give anything to hear that fucking Nerd ramble on about nothing in particular.

The moment the darkness engulfed him, his mind went from an insufferable deafening din of overlapping voices to so eerily empty he thought he'd died. He wasn't prepared for the when void suddenly released him so convinced there was nothing more to come. In comparison to the never-ending noise the silence was almost bliss... until it wasn't.

In the emptiness the shadows that would usually come to haunt him couldn't even form for how black the dark was. That absence of everything was more than enough to stop the familiar taunting and criticising tones from coming in the usual constant waves. His mind couldn't use the voices he once trusted to wear him down further and for that he was grateful. It wasn't until, like a switch flipping, that there was light again, and now that there was something, he knew he wouldn't be able to stop them. Couldn't do anything at all in fact. Merely trying to twitch his fingers was impossible, nevermind trying to use his Quirk to spark even a flicker of light in the mysterious abyss.

It was cold too, so fucking cold.

Going from that complete utter and terrifying nothing, no feeling, no sound, to a room far too warm and where the low lighting was too much for his tired eyes was not the relief he'd desired. The shock was more than enough that between the options of fight, flight or freeze, Katsuki was doing the latter. He knew he should be moving, that he should be fighting back, defending himself. But he couldn't do anything even if he tried. It wasn't just the exhaustion that was haemorrhaging through him, whatever they'd done to him in that dark place had him paralyzed. How long had he even been stuck like that anyway? A few minutes? Hours... Days? More?

He was helpless. He knew it, and the voices, given new life, weren't helping.

Should have just given up and played dead, probably would have left you to burn like you deserve.

Can't believe you were weak enough to get caught like this? Did you even try to defend yourself?

Typical Villain, causing trouble for everyone. Your Sensei is probably dead... and your Classmates too!

All because of YOU.

Because YOU'RE WEAK!

They dulled at a sudden wave of stimulus and just how extremely quiet they got didn't make him feel any easier about his position. It was like time had stopped. Only at the spike of discomfort in his knees did anything start happening again. He guessed he must have hit the ground, too empty and devoid of any strength to keep himself standing, nevermind feel anything other than pain.

Katsuki could feel the light burning forcing him to keep his eyes shut, though he wanted them open he couldn't. The voices remained only distant echoes in the back of his mind as he fought to be in control again. Which as per fucking usual was a losing battle.

His mind was a mess but Katsuki was acutely aware of three things.

One, in contrast to all the burning sensations overtaking him the floor was cold, icy cold, cold enough that it only added to his discomfort reminding him of other issues that were far out of reach right now;

not that he was really sparing much energy to consider much else when he felt like he was seconds away from blacking out.

Second, was the abrupt feeling of hands, some cold, some warm and all too grabby and rough, lifting him, pulling and prodding. Touching places he'd rather not be touched. He couldn't tell how many people where feeling all over him, he just knew he hated it, it was like his skin was rotting away the second they made contact. He wanted it to stop and if he could move at all he'd blast them all to hell.

Lastly, was the sound of muffled voices and shuffling of bodies around him. With the voices in his head stunned all he could do was listen to their jabbering. The bastards that had saw fit to kidnap him. It was this knowledge that kept him right on the edge on consciousness just a little longer.

"Aww! He looks so cute! And still so angry! It'd be even better if he was bleeding and bruised! But no one could look as cute my Izu-kun!"

"Toga... you are aware Shigaraki will probably kill you himself if you touch this kid before he's even spoken to him right?"

"But Spinner-san! It would only be a little bite! And Tomura-kun wouldn't *kill* me!"

"Don't kid yourself kid."

An odd rush of weightlessness overcame him before the tight unrelenting grips left and the sudden touch of something soft was beneath him. He felt like he'd stopped breathing for a moment unsure of what the fuck was going on. Then he was certain his cheeks were being squeezed if the muted feeling of pressure on his face was any indication. He wished any part of him would respond to his command. Just to swat the bastard away. The need to get out was unbearable and here he was incapable of doing anything. Fucking useless just like always. He would wince if he was capable, but breathing was a task and he was barely holding out as it was.

"He looks half dead anyway! I bet he tastes sweet... Tomura wouldn't mind if I took a little..."

"Toga! Get the fuck-!"

There was the sound of a scuffle, grumbled protests, followed by a devious yet playful scream. Then a cascade of insane giggles, childish whining and a rush retreating steps before a door was being slammed

from a distance and Katsuki just lay there, listening, unable to move. Unable to do anything at all and that was almost more painful than the actual pain he was enduring.

The whole while there was a tightening in his chest. He knew he was in danger. Knew that wherever he'd been taken wasn't remotely safe, somewhere far and hidden away just to make sure no one would ever find him. He tried his hardest to make himself do fucking anything at all, but after everything, between the closet, his classmates and Aizawa about to expel him, he couldn't even fathom an ounce of energy to care. Not about any of it, not when he couldn't do a fucking thing to save himself. They could do what they wanted and Katsuki was helpless to stop them. Convincing himself to care was again just too much effort, so hoping they'd fuck off soon, he attempted to mentally prepare himself for whatever torture was to come.

"You good to watch him while I go toast that psycho bitch?"

"Sure thing, Dabi."

It struck him then, that aside from the Crispy bastard (who was apparently off to murder the *psycho*) none of these voices were familiar, not in the least. The more obvious reasoning of the League possibly branching out since he'd last encountered them went right over his head. The idea his half-conscious brain latched on to seemed more likely anyway. That they, the League, had already gotten so bored of him and his shit that they were selling him off. He wouldn't be surprised really. He knows he's hard to be around, has heard it countless times from countless extras and people more important. Everyone else left him for a reason, and he had no doubts even Villain's would do the same.

His Old Man had told him once it was difficult to love him in general. That he and his mother were working hard only to barely tolerate him on a daily basis. Of course there would be others that felt the same way. Even Villains wouldn't want to deal with his bullshit, conscious or not. The thought that Villain's would even agree with his parents sent a pang of something agonizing through him, only adding to the emptiness building inside. He could feel himself fracturing, the shabby foundation holding up his entire image crumbling into dust as the weight of his situation slowly began to settle on his shoulders.

Of course they'd agree, they're right after all! You're a no good Villain! Worse than the worst! So horrible even they want rid of you! The best you can do now is take your own advice and pack it in already! Maybe find a

nice roof...

He heard himself whimper as he tried to ignore the resurging voices, both real and not, and once again forced himself to do anything. He had to have something in him. He managed to twitch a finger, and then whined louder at how helpless he felt being unable to do anything more, at how exhausted he felt from doing something so basic while still unable to even open his eyes and face whatever was coming for him. If this was going to be the end then he wanted to look the fuckers in the eyes.

The whispering stopped and the quiet was almost suffocating. His breath hitched as he heard footsteps draw near. Stopped breathing altogether when he felt a warm hand press on his forehead, and yet another new voice he didn't recognise attempted to lull him back to sleep.

“Shh. You're alright now little Hero. Sleep.”

Katsuki felt himself relax a fraction, almost able to press himself into the comforting warmth of that hand, but he didn't want to sleep. He knew he wasn't safe, but the strange, disembodied voice continued to sooth him and the warm palm gently stroked through his hair. Fighting seemed pointless when he knew trying would only make things worse. What had fighting back got him so far? Nothing but more pain and misery.

He was too tired to fight back anyway, too tired to question the voice and who it belonged to. Too tired to do anything other than lie there and listen to a stranger telling him to sleep, that he was safe, that no one was going to hurt him here. The more they spoke the more he found himself believing it. Wishing it was true. So instead of continuing his struggle in vain Katsuki let the tension drain out of himself all at once. As silence settled in, and the light beyond his eyelids disappeared, Katsuki heard the ghosts and shadows creeping back in on him. He did the only thing he could and let the heavy pull of sleep drag him under.

“Katsuki!” came the screeching voice of his mother from the park entrance.

When Katsuki looked to see her, he was met with the same angry face he'd left behind. Beside her was Auntie Inko with tear stained cheeks, and he knew he was in for it. After his 'stunt' with the tent, they were supposed to stay in the house, but Katsuki was mad at her. She'd called him weak, and his Quirk Villainous, and he knew the way to the park so he grabbed Zuku's hand and ran. Hadn't even thought about the consequences. He would use his explosions to attract attention if anything weird happened (which nothing had!) and he'd keep Zuku safe just like he promised he would.

His Quirk wasn't Villainous, it was strong, and he was strong and he'd beat all the other Villains and keep the Quirkless Zuku safe!

The desire to ignore her completely was strong but ever since his Quirk manifested she'd been growing ever more impatient with him. Pushing her buttons after that last scolding would be silly. But still they were in the middle of game of Heroes and Villains, Katsuki hadn't won yet. A quick look to his left and Izuku didn't look like he wanted to leave just yet either. So to impress his friend and be as awesome as all his teachers told him he was he shouted back at her.

"We're busy Old Hag! Come back later!"

Zuku gasped beside him, "Kacchan you shouldn't talk to your mom like that!"

"I can talk however I want Zuku! And when I'm the Number One Hero we'll do 'what' we want too and then no one can tell us off!"

The awe in those green eyes never ceased to be a well of encouragement as he set off small fireworks in his palms. Katsuki thought nothing of it, neither the gesture nor the saving him. It was something he knew he'd have to do now that the nerd was officially Quirkless. Before it had been a waiting game, waiting for the Nerd to develop whatever version of his parent's Quirk he'd get and then they could start seriously work towards their goal... together. They were going to be Heroes one way or another and together they'd be better than All Might! The Wonder Duo.

Now though, it was all on Katsuki to fulfil that dream. He just had to become strong enough for the two of them. Nevermind what his mother had told him earlier. His Quirk wasn't Villainous, he'd show her. He'd master his Explosion, beat every Villain, win every fight and be way better than All Might. He'd protect everyone but especially the snot-nosed Nerd beside him.

"Get your ass over here this instant, Brat!" she screeched back, snapping him out of the day dream. Somehow she was incapable of moving into the

park to retrieve him herself. Katsuki stood firm in his spot atop the climbing frame taking every bit of the advantage it was.

“Kacchan, maybe we should...”

He huffed loud and obviously to show his unhappiness but conceded when Zuku continued to whine and tug on his sleeve. He'd always been a wimp. Katsuki was always the strong one, but he didn't want to upset the Nerd. Finding out he was Quirkless had his friend hiding away for days on end, convincing him to come over in the first place had been a trial in itself.

“Fine. Let's go Nerd.” He said, meeting his mother's angry glare from across the park. He felt a pit open in his gut, but he'd stay strong... for Zuku. Angry and only a little scared, he took Zuku by the wrist only intending to help him down. But when Zuku cried and tried to yank himself away he let go, not anticipating that the Nerd would back up to fall from their perch. The sound as Zuku hit the ground had Katsuki moving before he could fully comprehend what had even happened or was still happening. He could hear his mother cursing, and a constant crackle, both of which he ignored as he leapt down and ran to his friend's side.

“Zuku!” he reached out, taking a hold of him again. Heart racing a mile a minute and unaware of how much he was sweating, the resounding pops and the screams from Zuku had him backing off and then he realized... his hands, his Quirk... it wouldn't stop.

The more he panicked the worse it got until he tried to smother the once mesmerizing sparks with his own body. Clutching at his arms, clenching his tiny fists, he could feel every nip and bite as they tore at him, all the while Izuku cried, clutching a burned arm twisted in an unnatural way.

The smack to the back of the head was painful. It hurt more than it had earlier, than it ever had before, but this time he felt like it was deserved. He'd never heard Izuku scream like that.

“Brat! Inko I am so sorry about him, I don't... Is he alright?” her voice arced from tense to a strained calm as she spoke to him and then Aunt. But Katsuki was too focused trying to suppress his small explosions that only seemed to get worse as he took stock of what has just occurred. He'd hurt Izuku. Used his Quirk for bad... like a Villain. Like his mother had said he would. But he hadn't meant to, it just... happened. He doesn't even know why!

“I'm sure it was just an accident Mitsuki. He'll be fine, though I do think his arm might be broken... that was quite the fall wasn't it Izuku? But you're a big boy. My Mighty Boy, yeah?” Aunt said with a smile,

brushing tears softly from Izuku's wet cheeks.

Katsuki was sniffing himself, wet tears and snot staining his face as he watched Aunt Inko lift the smaller boy up.

"We'll pay for any medical expenses of course." His mom suddenly exclaimed.

Aunt either didn't hear or was too engrossed in trying stop Izuku from crying because she didn't answer out right, only smiled before walking away. Katsuki watched their receding forms before glaring down at his still sparking hands completely ignoring the stinging on his arms where he'd burned himself. He hadn't meant to do that, hadn't meant to let off any explosions, can't even think of a reason **why** it happened, doesn't understand **why** it only got worse after he noticed Zuku was hurt.

Another harsh slap to the back of his head broke him from his pondering and only further numbed him to everything other than the fact that Zuku was hurt because of him. Because of his Quirk. His Quirk that still wouldn't stop.

"Enough of the fucking Explosions Katsuki! The hell were you thinking! Did you think it would be fun to push him off!"

"I didn't push--"

Another slap and her hand roughly grabbing his burned arm shut him up as his mother dragged him out of the park towards home. The sparks still persisting like small fireworks in his palms.

"What part of stay where I can see you, did you not understand? Huh?! And **stop** with the Explosions!" she hissed, tightening her hold, completely unforgiving.

"You're hurting me!" he cried trying to tug his already sore arm from her vice like grip.

"And Izuku is hurting even more. Because of you! You broke his arm! And used that stupid Quirk of yours too! You're a menace. You're going to end up like the trash on the street if you keep acting this way!"

Katsuki couldn't stay silent as his mother berated his every move that day, even as she angrily hoisted him along by the arm not caring when he cried.

"It was an accident, I didn't want to hurt Zuku!"

“Oh please I saw you letting off your Quirk. So fucking reckless! What have I told you about using it! I’ve told you a million times that you have to be careful with Izuku! He’s Quirkless for crying out loud, I told you to be gentle!”

“I told you I didn’t do it on purpose!” he screamed, little explosions still going off wildly in his clenched fists, singeing his palms.

“The fuck did I just say Katsuki!” his mother screamed at him, before snatching him by the hair.

Katsuki cried out until suddenly there nothing. No pain, no pressure in his hair, no uncontrollable explosions he couldn’t switch off. He opened his eyes and there he was strolling home, the same street he’d just been on only the ground was a little further away.

‘I must be dreaming.’

The thought itself echoed around him even though he’d not voiced it and the fleeting peace was quick to disappear as something black and viscous engulfed him whole. Suddenly he couldn’t breathe, it was forcing it ways past his lips, in his nostrils, down his throat. It tasted vile, like his mother’s burnt cooking. He fought, struggled as hard as he could, the sound of his Quirk beyond his own control resounding all around him.

*When he managed to free his head, he saw them. The Pro’s. Heroes come to help him, to **save** him, only they weren’t moving. They were holding back onlookers, watching him suffocate to death as he was violated in ways he didn’t want to think about.*

“Come on kid, give in already! You’re the perfect skinsuit! Your Quirk is so powerful! We could do such amazing things together if you just give me control!”

The only things his mind could think in that moment was that he could just give in. Just let this Villain puppeteer him. It wouldn’t be his fault right? No one was going to help him, and if it meant he got to live even as a puppet then letting this Villain have what he wanted was the best option. He could see his vision blacking at the edges, as he fought for air, this wasn’t a fight he could win.

No one could blame him if the Heroes hadn’t bothered right?

Katsuki was about to relinquish was little he had left, hearing the Sludge coo in his mind, praising him for being so accommodating, feeling his lungs fill with fluid as he choked and failed to take a breath. Then there was a

flash of something in the crowd. Green. And he could breathe again.

The rush of fresh air was heady as oxygen filled him up. His vision was filled with the sobbing Green haired mess that was **Deku**.

“The- f-fuck are you- doing!” he growled, his throat burning from the sludge that had receded so fast, tasting copper as he tried to swallow.

“You looked like you needed **saving**! I couldn’t just watch you die!”

The words hit him like a bullet train. Hard and fast and too much to compute in the single moment he had before the Sludge was invading his senses again. The Quirkless Deku, among a crowd of gormless onlookers and licensed Pro Heroes, had been the one to run mindless into save his sorry ass. After everything? After what he said earlier... why was the damn Nerd so much fucking better than him?!

There wasn’t time to think, not when breathing was becoming troublesome again. But the sight of Deku, weak, pathetic Deku doing what even the Heroes couldn’t do spurred something in him. He wasn’t going to give in so easily not while he was still kicking. Not while Deku was still fighting.

But even then his own efforts had been fruitless. It was All Might who’d saved him in the end.

While he got praised for being strong and having a powerful Quirk, Deku was scolded for being so careless. And all Katsuki could think was that if Deku hadn’t stepped in when he did, if he hadn’t decided to look past those horrible words he’d been told earlier, hadn’t bought him those few precious seconds of air, he’d be dead or worse. Worse being the living puppet he’d been moments from committing himself to being, a host to that Villain and his whims. Katsuki had almost given up and like always it was fucking Deku who’d pushed him over the edge to keep fighting.

Every step of the way home that day was more painful than any day before and only a fraction of the pain to come. All he could think was why did Deku do anything at all? Why had his once friend even bothered? Sure Katsuki understood that the Nerd wanted to be a Hero, but without a Quirk he couldn’t right? Katsuki had spent the better part of a decade convincing himself that was true. That weak as he was Deku could never be a Hero... but maybe he was wrong. And after everything that had happened since that day he **knew** he’d been wrong.

It wasn't the sound of voices that urged Katsuki to get his eyes open when consciousness first revisited him. It was the inability to breathe that had followed him from the nightmare that was never-ending. Yet as strong as that urge was the weight of exhaustion kept them welded shut. Trying to move was still just as much of a challenge. It was like trying to wade through quicksand, with an invisible force dragging him down deeper the more he struggled. The racing of his heart told him he should be on guard.

He was acutely aware there was someone or maybe several someone's in the room with him right now. Villain's his mind supplied. People who were going to hurt him. Just waiting for the right moment to strike him down. To use him as a puppet. As much as Katsuki knew it was inevitable, he wouldn't just let it happen. If he could manage to let off even one tiny explosion that might help him.

Or make it all worse. Remember what happened the last time you used your explosions to defend yourself?!

He barely had a chance to try before the same warmth from before was pressing against his forehead. It reminded him of days long gone. Of when his mother would ruffle his hair instead of pull it, when she would make sure he wasn't too badly hurt instead of adding to it. Whatever tension had been building vanished in the hope that maybe this was one of those times. That maybe he was still just dreaming. Still back at camp and when he woke up everything would be as normal as it could be. He felt fingers comb through his hair relaxing him even more and once again he was out like a light.

The second time Katsuki woke he felt a little more aware. When he opened his eyes, surprised that he even could, it was to a pitch black room. He sat upright like a shot forgetting everything else and kicked the bedsheets off himself.

Wait... bedsheets? Where the hell was he?

His attempt to stand was halted by the rattle and snapping of short chains, conveniently linked to something bulky and glove-like he now realized where around his hands. Instantly he was thrown into fight or flight mode.

This couldn't be the closet, there was too much space, he could move mostly unhindered, the "floor" (mattress?) was soft compared to the hardwood in the closet at home. Perhaps he *was* still dreaming. But the panic had already settled in his brain. The sudden flooding of memory, of just how not well camp had gone, had him lightheaded. He couldn't see... the Hag had locked him away... she didn't even wait to get him home, she wasn't going to let him out this time. He couldn't breathe, he didn't want this. He hadn't wanted his teacher to get hurt because of him, or to get caught... his mind paused... he'd been caught. That burnt Patchwork Villain had dragged him away... how did he get back?

He couldn't remember. Couldn't remember anything after Mandalay telling everyone he was a target... so that must mean... he was still with them? But then why a bed? Why not torture him and keep him awake the entire time just to torment him like everyone else did?!

His mind was so wrapped up in the seemingly endless possibilities he didn't notice the creak of door opening, didn't realize the room was lit up now. His eyes unseeing as he tried to make sense of everything going on in his head. Didn't even register the weight on the bed beside him. Not until cold hands were pulling him and he could feel the distinct press of his back on someone's chest.

Katsuki just left it to happen as his throat continued to close.

He heard a muffled voice, he couldn't understand it at all. There was too much to think about, about how he'd royally fucked up beyond any hope of fixing things. There was no way the Hag would even want to look at him after this. Then a cool hand pushed against his chest as he gasped for air. It was too cold, clammy like slime spreading over him constricting his airways even more, he could feel it through the thin material of his top. He still couldn't see, nothing but the judging eyes of everyone that saw him for what he was.

Pathetic.

Worthless.

A Villain.

A new face stepped in his direct line of sight... someone else, another villain, he was surrounded. Katsuki tried to move but found himself rooted in place, the cool sludge holding him down, choking him. Suffocating him. No one was going to save him this time. Not Deku, not All Might. Definitely not Villains.

“Hey kiddo... Bakugou, look at me, can you do that for me?” With a set of moving lips to focus on the meaning of the words being spoken came easily. “Hey, I need you to breath for me. Can you feel my friend breathing? Do you think you can match his pace?”

The more the voice said the more he became aware of. The coolness pressed against his back and chest were setting a steady and relaxed pace that he struggled to match. The cooler he felt the more it felt like he was dying. Like he was back in that alleyway, abandoned and left for dead. None of the Heroes wanted to help him then. Even All Might hadn’t wanted to... not until Deku ran in. Stupid fucking Deku... everyone loves that idiot.

What’s so fucking great about the Nerd anyway? Huh? He cried and moaned about how unfair everything was and did fuck all to change anything... but that’s not true anymore. Since coming to UA, since revealing that OP fucking Quirk he’s had this whole time he’s been different. Just as big a cry-baby but more headstrong and driven. He hated it. Hated how much worse he felt now that he knew Deku wasn’t weak, that it really had been *him* who was the weak one all along. The Hag was right, his Old Man was right... everyone was so fucking right about him and he hates how fucking twisted and empty he feels. How purposeless and useless he feels.

Katsuki can feel himself gasping for air. The voice kept speaking and he kept trying to breathe. Whoever this was they weren’t any better than the rest of them. Didn’t matter how nice they were being now, it was nothing more than pity. They’d turn on him eventually. Everyone did. Everyone wanted him gone. These people, these *Villains*, they only wanted him to keep breathing to continue his suffering of course. Not like he hadn’t been asking for it with all the shit he’d pulled over the years. He couldn’t really expect anything less at this point. Karma always came back with a vengeance.

The cold grip on his back began to warm up, and just like that it became easier to breathe. It didn’t remind him of the Sludge so much anymore, he could feel himself leaning back into the heat, not caring if he looked any more pathetic seeking comfort from a Villain. That kind of shit was the least of his worries right now. If he wanted any

chance of recovering from this in any capacity then he needed to pull his shit together and work on getting out.

“That’s it, that’s great. Keep it up. Brilliant. You’re doing so good, Bakugou.”

He swallowed, gasping, starting to take short steady breathes. Blinked the wetness from his eyes and looked up at the owner of the voice. A woman with mid-length hair, a strong jawline, wearing sunglasses and a horrible looking plaid shirt and t-shirt combination. She smiled at him like he was a pre-schooler who’d just taken his first steps.

“Who the f-“ he tried to speak erupting only into a coughing fit. The mystery person was quick to continue their instruction, calming him like before.

“Hush. Don’t force yourself, kid. Take your time.”

Katsuki frowned and tried not to glare, whoever this was they really had just helped him. Them and their friend who he could still feel pressed tightly against his back, had *helped* him. Villain’s wouldn’t do this sort of thing right? Still he didn’t trust them not to turn at a moment’s notice. Nothing stopped everyone else from doing the same and Villains were supposed to be worse.

He lifted an arm to brush away the sweat he could feel on his brow, or he tried to at least. Being sharply reminded of the restraints he bore. And there was the twist. With the lights on he could see now. They were Quirk suppressors. Big bulky, metallic, hideous things that looked surprisingly well made; he had to say though they were ten times more comfortable than the ones UA had forced him into. They actually did the job of suppressing his Explosions and he could still feel his fingers.

Staring between his bound hands, unable to turn himself and follow the chains with the other Villain still holding him with cold clammy hands, Katsuki looked to mystery helper in front of him. Luckily they seemed to read him without issue. That was more than he could say for others.

“You kept letting off explosions in your sleep. Boss thought it best to avoid any more... unnecessary problems.”

More problems?

Of course. He fucking knew it. Even Villains saw him as problematic.

They were probably regretting taking him with all the shit they'd had to deal with so far. Barely had him through the door and he was causing them so much trouble.

The little time he spent dwelling on the fact had him thinking them getting bored with him would just play to his advantage.

Only if you're looking to die dumbass! The second they realize you're not useful you're gone.

Ah. The bastard voice just knew the best moments to creep back up. He suddenly missed the ignorance of being asleep, even if the nightmares were almost worse. As before he opted do his best to ignore it. An opportunity to have the higher ground with Villain's, however dire, couldn't be missed.

Katsuki hated how right the voice was this time. If the Villains plan wanted him for something, then if he proved useless he wasn't going to last. Perhaps he should play along, just for now. He'd never let himself fall to that level, no matter what the majority thought of him. Where he was, this was the League's hideout, he could use this. He might have been kidnapped but the idiots had let him rest and despite his earlier panic he felt more awake than ever. It felt like all his exhaustion was gone and he was going to make the most of it.

If everyone thinks he's a Villain then maybe getting himself out of here *and* getting some intel, maybe even taking a few out on his way, will help prove otherwise

Jeez are you still at that crap? Just give up already! It's not like anyone would give a shit or even notice if you did accomplish any of that. Not that you even could. Weak and pathetic, it's the reason you're here and not with the rest of your classmates. Tch.

"Where am I?" he huffed ignoring the voice, making sure he put as much anger into his words as possible. Donning the mask of frustration that he always used to ward off unwanted interaction was a comfortable sort of familiar. He wouldn't let Villain's think he was an easy target. Well, any easier than he already had been. He could feel the dried tears on his cheeks, the tightness on his skin as the salty tracks took what little moisture was still there; clear evidence of how weak he'd truly been.

"That's not important right now. What *is* important though... is you. So, how are you feeling?"

Katsuki blinked at the Villain, watching his own gawking reflection in the scraped, black lenses of cheap sunglasses. Watching as he scrutinised every detail he could about this person he'd never seen before. This menace to society who was being kind... to *him*.

"Why the fuck do you care?" he attempted with a growl. The mere inclusion of the expletive made him feel so relaxed he literally couldn't wait to spit out some more he didn't care how dry his throat felt.

"Wow, that makes 3! You going for all the 5W's princess?"

This second voice wasn't so new. It was familiar, had taunted him moments before his body gave out and the very sound of it instilled a fresh new rage in him. A rage more for his own weakness at letting the asshole take him in the first place. Sure he'd been drained and unable to use his Quirk to its best (or at all in the end) but that wasn't an excuse. All the training, all the special classes and lessons he'd endured over his life hadn't been just so he could get kidnapped by this crispy fucker and his emo gang.

Despite the effort it took he tensed up and jolted back, his head missing the target as the Crispy Villain shot away snickering all the while. He met those pale, icy blue eyes and loathed the mirth he found there. Hated how that chill reminded him of Icy Hot and how he was always being mocked and degraded for simply struggling to exist.

"Quick reflexes! Almost got me there." The Villain heckled.

Katsuki fought the restraints and tried to make himself look as vicious as possible. Which wasn't difficult given he chained like a wild dog.

"Oh yeah? Let me out of these and I'll show you how fast I really am!" he snapped back, rattling his restraints for emphasis. What he wouldn't give to let of an explosion or six in the asshole's face.

"So full of energy. I preferred it when you were drooling on my lap Princess."

Katsuki growled as his attempt to barrel forward and tackle the bastard where he stood failed, the chains were short, attached to the bed frame from the looks of it. His movement was stopped abruptly with how restricted he was. He found it odd though that he didn't feel as bad as he had during camp. His aching muscles, every discomfort big and small he'd carried all the way through camp seemed to be

gone. Still the pain it caused him to even put that much stress on his arms right now, with the added weight of the suppressors had him biting back a wince.

“Enough Dabi.” The other warned. “We’re supposed to be recruiting him, not antagonising him!”

Dabi, smirked and sat in a chair by the door more than content to watch Katsuki squirm. Not that he *was* squirming, he was merely gearing up to blow his head off the next chance he got.

“Like hell I’m joining you assholes!”

Sunnies looked right at him and sighed, “Come on, at least give us a chance. We haven’t done anything untoward so far have we?”

“You mean except for kidnapping and falsely imprisoning me?” he scoffed.

He’d never admit it but this was really taking it out of him. The burst of energy he’d felt just moments ago already waning. He might be seconds away from nearly passing out again, but he’d make sure as hell it didn’t happen until they left him to stew in the dark again. No matter how tired he was he wouldn’t let them see any more weakness.

“Well, when you put it like that it *does* sound terrible!” Dabi laughed. “How about you think of this more like a *rescue*? We’re the dashing Knights and *you’re* the Damsel in distress.”

Rescue? How many times and to how many people was he going to have to reiterate that he didn’t need fucking saving! He didn’t need any help! He was strong enough to handle himself, he didn’t need to rely on anyone. If he couldn’t look after himself then how was he supposed to become a Hero?!

Yet, with every passing day, the idea of becoming a Hero was drifting further away, and any chance of solving the problem looped back to him. If Katsuki himself was the problem then there wasn’t any real way to fix it, well there was only one way... He pulled on the restraints, the jab of distress in his arms grounding enough that the odd feeling swelling in his chest dulled before it could become too strong.

“Fuck you! If you don’t let me out I’ll break my way out and that’s if the Pros don’t show up to kick your asses into Tartarus first!”

It was Dabi's turn to scoff. "Nice sentiment but no one's coming kid."

Katsuki glared before looking to the other. The asshole was just saying that to fuck with him, of course he was. His Classmates might hate him, he's pretty sure Aizawa-sensei has had more than enough of his failure of an ass and his parents... well his Old Man doesn't care and the Hag... he's almost certain he's got no chance of making her proud after this latest fuck up. But there's no way they'd just leave him here. Was there? As much as they all hated him, they wouldn't just abandon him like this?

Dabi held his stare, completely unaffected by the malice Katsuki was pouring into his snarl.

"You've been with us a few days now, and there hasn't been a single mention of you in any of the reports. Heck, they didn't even bring you up in that fancy ass Press Conference they had earlier."

At those words Katsuki felt what little hope he had been clinging to sink into the same hole that all his hopes and desires where piling up in. A disgusting pile of rotting dreams that at this point were nearly unsalvageable. A few days? He'd been here, presumably, sleeping for several fucking days?! And no one... not a single person knew?! No one cared? Well it explained why his aches and pains were faded but that couldn't be true. The Commission wouldn't allow that? UA wouldn't allow it! Or maybe they would. Easier to just brush him under the rug like the worthless speck of dust he was.

No! There had to be someone. Anyone. His parents? Deku? He knows he's a nuisance but someone had to give at least an ounce of a shit, if not about him then about the backlash that might occur if they were found to be hiding something like a student getting kidnapped!

Tch. As if! Everyone you've mentioned, they're all people who'd probably give anything just to be rid of you! Deku least of all, you're parents most. You're the root of everyone's problems and with you gone things will be so much easier for them. Nobody would care about a Villain going to where he belongs.

He shook his head and held his breath feeling himself about to slip again. This couldn't be happening, this had to be another nightmare... but since when did his nightmares conjure unfamiliar faces to mock him?

Never.

His nightmares had always pulled what he'd already known as real to ridicule him, and sure Crispy might have been someone he'd encountered in real life but Sunnie's he'd never seen before... ever. Not to mention the other voices he recalled hearing. Not even the room was familiar. With the lights now on he could see it all in its dingy glory. Dirty floors in dire need of a good scrub, sparse furniture with just the bed and the chair Dabi was sat on by the door. No windows... explained why it had been so damn dark with the door shut. And the door itself... like an industrial weighted slab of metal, probably with more locks and bolts on it than there had any reason to be.

It was like his own little prison cell. Five star compared to the one at home. But probably worse for the company he had. Not just the voices in his head but real live Villains trying to pull the strings, feeding him obvious lies to watch him panic trying to figure out the truth. But just what was the truth at this point?

Dabi sat picking at his nails as Katsuki glared up at him. "Big Sis, go get him something to eat would you. He's bound to be hungry after all the excitement. I'll keep an eye on him."

'Big Sis' gave Dabi a sceptical look before looking back at Katsuki and nodding. Immediately he felt on edge, he had a feeling that she wouldn't hurt him if left alone with him. Dabi on the other hand... asshole had literally started a forest fire to catch him and the look in his eyes was too threatening to let him sit at ease.

"Any requests little Hero?" Katsuki just glared at her. Like fuck he'd eat anything they gave him either way.

"Yeah, let me go already, assholes!"

She shrugged and quietly left the room. The second the door closed Dabi was up and over to him like a shot. Katsuki immediately tensed and despised that he shuffled himself back against the poor excuse of a headboard, the wire framed bed screeching as he did. This seemed to slow Dabi's advance to the point the man stopped altogether. The Villain quirked his head like a curious puppy before rolling his eyes. The Patchwork bastard then decided to settle where his Big Sis had been moments ago at the end of the bed.

"Look Princess, I know you're never going to join us--"

"Then why the fuck do all this moron?!" rattling chained hands towards him. "You enjoy fucking things up for everyone!"

That's rich coming from you!

Katsuki did his best to continue ignoring the grating nature of the comments in his head.

Dabi didn't seem impressed. "Like I said, this *was* a rescue. As for the restraints? Just Magne said, your nightmares were only getting worse and... we didn't want you hurting yourself."

Katsuki continued to glare. This guy had to be full of shit and he'd tell him as much. "You're full of shit."

Dabi huffed a laugh, only getting more comfortable in his spot. Katsuki continued to glare, sparing the odd glance to see if there was anything he could take advantage of. His gaze was snatched back when the Crispy fucker continued talking.

"When Shiggy suggested recruiting you I was completely against it. Having seen that shit show at the Sports Festival I knew you'd be too much trouble, a headache. But he was stubborn about it, kept saying Hero society was holding you back and that you'd leap at the chance to prove them wrong. That you'd prove useful to *his* plans. *I* had to see for myself what he saw. Had to see what was so amazing about you..."

Katsuki swallowed at the mere idea of what that actually meant for Villain.

"What the fuck are you trying to say fucker?"

"I'm pretty sure kids your age don't usually spend their summer staycations in the closet." Dabi continued holding his glare showing no signs to backing down. Katsuki's worst fears came to life in that simple, short sentence. Dabi carried on undeterred by his silence.

"I stopped by your house last week. Thought I'd get to see you. Hung around a few days and not a sign of you. I thought maybe you'd been sent to a summer class? Or some shit like that. You parents seem like the type to do that. Then, just as I was about to ditch... they let you out. So, how often does that happen?"

The fact that Dabi was questioning him about it didn't matter, the simple fact that someone saw him in that state, saw him after that... at his weakest, he'd literally rather die than admit it.

"I've no idea what the fuck you're talking about, Patches!" Katsuki snarled, immediately defensive. He knew it was like waving a flag that

said *you got me*, but he couldn't help himself. There was no fucking way this Villain gave enough of a shit to agree to kidnapping him after witnessing him in that sorry state. No way that would inspire a murderer to enact a supposed *rescue*.

Despite the suppressors he could feel the sweat slicking up his palms and trying to spark. It didn't hurt surprisingly, the few small sparks that didn't catch barely held any power at all; perhaps because of the tension making him numb.

Continuing to glare Dabi down was all he could do, short of cussing up a storm or making himself look any more inferior than he already was.

The fact that someone knew... he thought he'd feel ill if it ever happened, and the fact this Villain was insinuating things on top of it just made him feel even worse. He wanted to be beyond capable of feeling anything other than rage, wanted horribly to feel nothing but anger like everyone said he was only capable of right now. He couldn't believe that any of this was even happening to him right now.

Dabi sighed, fucking sighed, just like fucking Aizawa-sensei would... thinking about the teacher and the still unknown condition of the man made him feel empty. He'd failed again. There might not have been a test but he had definitely failed, screwed up so bad that someone was potentially dead, and god knows how everyone else was. They might hate him, but he'd never want anything bad to happen to them. If they were hurt because of him, then he was chained up just like he should be.

Having said that he wasn't about to let a fucking villain know how defeated he felt. He wasn't going to believe them either. Someone was looking for him. For good or bad he had to believe that.

"So? You kidnapped me to what? Recruit me and now you're going to fill my head with bullshit? Fuck with my head or some dumb shit like that?! Huh? Well not sorry to burst your bubble Patches but I'm not going to let crap like that change my mind about being a Hero! So you and your emo band rejects can go fuck yourselves!"

Dabi's expression was grim, a small hint of amused playing at the corner of his lips before he leaned back and made himself even more comfortable.

"Like I said. I don't think you'll join. Never have."

“Then why the fuck am I here?!” Katsuki snapped, fighting hard again the sheer terror overtaking him.

He could feel himself slipping, the burning in his eyes surpassed only by the stress tightening in his gut and chest.

“Let’s not go into another panic, shall we? Like I said, it was a rescue on my part, nothing more.” Dabi was up and easing his way forward. Katsuki had nowhere else to go and flinched at the cool, clammy hands suddenly holding his wrists and forcing him to loosen the tension he was putting on himself. “Shigaraki’s still going to want to talk to you though, now you’re awake. So, do yourself a favour and play along. You can do whatever you want after that.”

Dabi left the lights on as he left, just as Sunnie’s, or Big sis, returned with a bizarre assortment of crisps and junk food on a paper plate. He ignored them even as they tried to coax him into eating. Big Sis didn’t stick around long after his persistent refusal began to bore them.

Completely alone his mind was left to run rampant.

There was no imaginable scenario in his head that told him any Villain could be remotely kind or thoughtful. He’d been raised to know them as the worst of the worst. A blight on society and a scourge to all things good. He was aiming for a career than involved rooting their kind out.

Yet, they’d shown him kindness, had soothed his ailments. Claimed understanding that others closer to him couldn’t claim.

And they wanted to recruit him.

The League of Fucking Villain’s took one look at him and thought yeah he’ll be a good addition to the team. Fucking fuck. Fuck what that Dabi prick said, it was probably some attempt at reverse psychology. Katsuki wasn’t sure what he could do now, couldn’t think of any way to spin this one in a good light to anyone. Even the voice didn’t speak up because somehow it knew he wasn’t going to argue this time. There was no need. It was cemented now, he was the Beast of UA, Villain in the making literally kidnapped with the intention of being recruited and the media weren’t even being informed he was missing. Probably to stop any backlash hitting UA, Katsuki had been at the centre of nearly every UA scandal so far this year and this was by far the worst.

He was fucked no matter what. If he did manage to get away how

many people would believe he was innocent, how many would think he wasn't just a spy and hadn't been all along. And if he stayed... he'd be what everyone saw him as anyway... so what was he supposed to do here?

He felt sick to his core. Unable to stand the smell of the food left before him. Despite his best efforts he pitched forward emptying his stomach, spitting bile and vomit on the sheets completely uncaring and hopelessly lost.

Who fucking knows how long it's been now. Katsuki thought with the lights on he'd at least have a way of counting the days, but with no proper schedule to adhere to and no windows to even guess the time from, he'd no clue. It could have been 1 hour or 1 week and he'd not be able to tell the difference.

They had opted to move him at one point. While the change of scenery was somewhat pleasant, the methods employed to move him from the bed to the chair in bar upstairs were less than appreciated. Mr. Compress, as he called himself, and his stupid marbles could fuck right off to hell and never come back.

Whatever was happening to his body when he was crammed into one of those fucking marbles felt like being torn apart and crushed at the same time. He was kind of happy in retrospect that he'd been too out of it the first time round, though that just meant he was all the less prepared for it this time. The after effects he was too well acquainted with.

The decompression, as Mr. Compress explained it, was similar to experiencing altitude sickness. The temporary paralysis, blurred vision and the difficulty breathing was all completely normal apparently.

Also worked in their favour since he once again wasn't able or capable of fighting back for a few minutes following being released from the suffocating prison.

He could feel himself coming back to full control of his limbs just as they finished chaining him up again, cold metal crossing his body fastened too tight to be comfortable. The chair itself was clearly designed for someone both much bigger and taller, perhaps one of those Nomu creatures. The longer he sat there unmoving the easier it became to ignore just how uncomfortable it was. All he could do was simply sit there and take it.

Fuck, as bad as it was he just wanted to go home. Just wanted something familiar and reliable. At home he knew what was coming. These fuckers were just confusing the heck out of him. Every single waking second spent here was driving him mad. They were Villains and yet they weren't actively hurting him or torturing him (unless he counted Handsy's fucking gamer jargon laced speeches, that were so repetitive he'd gained a constant headache just trying to ignore him, that was definitely some form of torture). They were like some whacked up family, trying to make him feel at home while forcing him to sit still and watch from a distance. Watching them was like watching some shitty daytime tv drama, something Katsuki had never enjoyed.

There was Toga, she was one creepy ass bitch, with her bizarre penchant for seeing things bleed. Dabi had to stop her on more than once from cutting him right open and taking a peek inside; not that she'd have find anything other than his rotting innards. Or maybe she'd find a big pile of nothing considering how empty he felt.

Then there was her '*best frendo*', Twice. He was just as fucking mad if not more, with his second self that was always in opposition to himself. He'd say one thing but really mean another, but then do the first thing anyway. Katsuki had to wonder if he had Deku's proclivity to speaking his thoughts aloud would he sound as mad as this masked Villain, maybe it was only a matter of time before he snapped that far.

Mr. Compress, aside from the longwinded and unnecessary lectures he gave everyone on literally everything, was fairly decent as far as Villain's go. Didn't bother much with Katsuki beyond what was asked of him. In this case that only involved the packaging and delivering. Kind of reminded him of his Old Man, not remotely interested unless Katsuki's actions affected him directly, that much became obvious when the Villain had been left to watch him for a few hours. It was

only when Katsuki had mocked his stupid attire that he man had even remotely acknowledge him.

Big Sis Magne, he had to say it, was his preferred company of the lot of them. She didn't expect much of anything from him. Was literally like the big sister he never had. Standing up for him when the others teased him too much and making sure he was comfortable and fed and watered, as much as he refused it. He made it complete hell for her but she didn't back down. She was pouty and playful but had a bizarre awareness of his boundaries and how not to push them. Aside from Dabi she was the only one he could get a decent argument out of, one of the few still sane among them.

The Warp gate guy, Kurogiri or something, hadn't said a word to him. In fact Katsuki wasn't even sure if the guy had even glanced in his direction yet. He just stood there dusting off glasses and pouring drinks. It was like he was on standby waiting for instructions or something. Like he was empty and without purpose, without something to do. Katsuki didn't like to think about *why* he was that way. Didn't want to know if the same fate awaited him.

The Lizard guy was somewhere on the same page as Compress, not really bothered with him, referring to him as a waste of time and how they should kill him already for being a '*false*' Hero. When he wasn't complaining about him, he was preaching. He took every chance he got to spout the *teachings of Stain*. That always sent Blood girl into a weird tizzy, she got extra touchy when she heard mention of Stain. Too fucking touchy.

And then there was Dabi... out of the whole fucking band of misfits, from the blood crazed maniacs to the indifference that he was used to, that fucker was the most annoying of all.

The crispy fucker was constantly trying to get him to... talk. Ugh. And not just about anything, he wasn't grilling him for info on UA's secrets, no the asshole was constantly probing him about his home life. Always trying to prompt him into breaking or snapping. Conjuring up scenarios' that were just far too close to real experiences for comfort. That wasn't even beginning to account for how insensitive the questions were, not that Katsuki was all above being insensitive.

"Who hits harder mum or dad?"

Katsuki did snap eventually, would always put on his game face and

growl and snarl at the dickhead to fuck off and died until he did. He always left him alone but would come back smiling. Always.

Just like now. Shigaraki had just left, incensed (yet again) by Katsuki's constant refusal of his most generous offer. Dabi drew a stool from the bar and sat down in front of him. Katsuki would spit had he any saliva left in him, but his lips and tongue were so dry he'd kill for some water at this point. It seemed refusing all the other times hadn't done him any favours. Though after the first drink they'd brought him had turned out to be straight vodka he didn't exactly trust that kindness.

He blinked, his eyes staying closed for too long as he fought the itchiness behind them, and when he opened them Dabi was still there holding a small glass of what he could only hope was water.

"Thirsty? You really do look thirsty Princess."

Katsuki licked his lips dying for just a drop but really he couldn't trust that they hadn't spiked it, not after the first time. The way it had burned his throat, the way the lights seemed to blink and flicker after that, sound warbled and distorted. He felt like he was floating even though he was tied down... it was too much of a mind fuck and the last thing he needed in this situation.

"Fuck off." He managed. He held back the urge to cough, even the smallest movements in this setup were difficult. "And stop fucking call me that."

Dabi grumbled, "You really are one stubborn fuck aren't you?"

"Takes one to know one bitch."

Dabi scoffed shaking his head as he leaned closer. Katsuki felt a cold hand perch at back of his neck, the other raising the glass to his lips. He hated that of all the Villain's Dabi seemed the only one to notice how this would make his freeze up and as such he always got his way.

"Drink up sunshine."

The cold of Dabi's palms were enough to have him seizing up but still he held his lips firmly shut, until Dabi pushed the glass forward and the desire to not spill any on himself, to maintain even the tiniest shred of dignity, had him gulping the room temperature liquid down. He gasped when he was done. Dabi hadn't exactly given him a chance to breathe.

Dabi loomed over him and watched as he caught his breath. "Better?"

Katsuki would shrug if he could but opted to remain silent and still. Begrudgingly enough he did feel a little better but he wasn't going to be any happier than before. Dabi carried on about his own business leaving the glass at the bar, Kurogiri instinctively lifting it to wash off and dry without a word.

After minutes of silence and thankfully no side effects Katsuki began to wonder just how long they'd keep this up. How long would they persist in fucking around, demanding that he join them on one end and reminding him that they knew he wouldn't on the other. Would he go completely insane first? Or would he be able to hold out for the inevitable eternity of being stuck with this freakshow? Would they sell him off to the highest bidder if he just kept refusing? Would he become some nutjob Doctor's secret in the basement? Bound and gagged for the rest of his miserable days knowing that 1-A, that Deku, went on to be good Heroes. Was this all just built up karma finally getting back at him?

No one was coming after all. He had just about accepted that now. It had been nearly an entire fucking week, probably, felt longer though. After the third day, Dabi had decided to make him watch the news headlines. Then the press conference. Katsuki got to hear all about the attack, about how a Pro Hero had gone missing, about how several people were injured too. There were no explicit details on anything and not even a whisper on him. He only took solace in the fact there'd been no report of anyone dying. That and at least his parents couldn't get angry about him fucking up their image. If no one knew about his predicament it was for the better. Everyone could carry on unaffected by his failures and UA wouldn't suffer another blow of bad press.

A clammy icy cold palm touched his forehead and he flinched back, waking up a slew of aches that had been dormant the last few days.

"You're not looking so hot kid? You getting sick?" Dabi could really just go fuck himself. "So pleasant, maybe I'll do that later but right now, I'm asking if you're feeling okay?"

Did I say that out loud?

Dabi scoffed, pressing his palm against his forehead again, "Yep, and you're still thinking out loud Princess. I think you've got a fever, you're delirious."

"Fuck off, I don't get sick!" it was true, with his Quirk making him run

just a little hotter and the glycerine booting his white blood cells into overdrive any infection typically died long before he could develop symptoms. “And why the fuck are your hands so damn cold?! Isn’t your Quirk supposed to fire or some shit?!”

Dabi stared at him, Katsuki wasn’t sure if the rage in his turquoise eyes was directed towards him or something else, but the sudden emptiness in there reminded him of... Icy Hot... it was the same indiscriminate gaze and it was gone just as fast. The Villain scoffed yet again resuming his place in front of him and regarding his own hand, the scarred tissue on his arm creeping out from his sleeve stopping with a line of blood encrusted staples just before his knuckles.

“You really want to know?”

“Do whatever... I really don’t give a fuck...”, but honestly Katsuki really had nothing better to do and he was admittedly a little curious. He supposed listening to Dabi run his mouth was better than Handsy’s voice grating on his nerves or allowing a chance for the voices to resurge and torment him in the quiet.

There was a spell of silence, broken only every now and then by the sound of Kurogiri setting down a clean glass but otherwise there was nothing. And then, as he’d anticipated, the nothing gave rise to the voices he didn’t want to face right now.

Why don’t you just accept their offer already? You’d be more comfortable if they let you out of these chains right? It would be where you belong wouldn’t it... Villain. Just think-

“My mother.” Dabi started.

The disturbance thankfully interrupted the voice as it was about to continue. “Huh?”

“The cold hands, I’m pretty sure I get it from my mother. The fire was from my bastard of a father, not that I really consider the douchebag my father anymore. Haven’t for a long time.”

Katsuki thought about what he was hearing, had to wonder why it seemed familiar? Ah, yeah...

“Icy Hot...”

“Hmm, what’d you say Princess?” Dabi sounded genuinely concerned and it irked him. How the fuck could a Villain, a member of *the*

goddamned League of Villains, have kidnapped him and have him feeling like he was actually cared for, more than his actual parents had ever made him feel; not in a long, long time.

“You sound like Icy Hot. Asshole is a fucking dickhead but he hates his dad too... his mom has an ice Quirk I think.”

Another bout of quiet and Katsuki felt like he was starting to drift off when Dabi spoke again.

“Shouto, how is he? Still a spoiled brat?”

Katsuki raised his head and looked right into the shining blue eyes. He wasn't sure what he was seeing but the more he looked the more he saw and he didn't know what exactly it all meant.

“You know him?” *Was he on your list too?* He wanted to ask.

“Hmm. Known him far longer than you have.” Dabi smirked. Katsuki felt his own eyes widen against his will. Was he implying what he thought he was? Was Icy Hot in league with League?

“Keep that to yourself, okay Princess? Not like anyone would believe you anyway.”

Nope, no one ever believes you because you're an unreliable fuck. Only trouble.

Katsuki didn't know what to say, what could he say? There was always the possibility this was another ruse to fuck with him. So instead of snapping back, demanding more, he said nothing. Just let his head hang as digested what that might mean. He heard the door opened abruptly. Continued to stare and ponder until the entire League was back again, only looking up when he saw Dabi's shoes leave his sight.

The Villain walked to take up his usual corner of the room but not before rounding on Shigaraki.

“He's really not going to change his mind you know?”

Handsy scowled, or at least Katsuki assumed he scowled, hard to tell under that hand he had plastered to his face 24/7; it looked creepily too realistic to just be a life cast of his own. He didn't seem to care for what Dabi thought though. Neither did Katsuki actually, not in so much as anyone else cared. Here he was fuck knows how many days

into his bizarre captivity and it didn't look like it was going to end well. Ergo nobody must care, so why should he?

"Look, I'm bored of having to explain this to you Bakugou. There's only so many ways to tell you this. You should be able to tell by now those *Heroes* you idolise so much aren't coming. They've been holding you back. Ruining you. Literally chaining you down and silencing you! So why not stay and join us, here where your talents will serve a much better cause. Where you'll be more than just a tool. You know you're better than what they're letting you be, so join us and show them. Show them all what you're really capable of. Become the protagonist instead of some NPC nobody cares about!"

Katsuki didn't like the fact the rambles of a Villain, who had only a few months ago ordered a Nomu to kill him, were actually sounding reasonable. It must just be the fact he'd been here so long, hearing the same modified talk over and over. Truthfully, he'd been starting to think the same thing anyway. That the Heroes, teachers, his classmates were all trying to tell him something... trying to show him that he wasn't cut out to become a Hero. That he was more trouble than he was worth, irredeemable, a lost cause. A Villain.

Maybe he *should* just join them. Perhaps he should just accept the offer, there was nothing good waiting for him back home. Literally any teacher at UA was more than ready to expel him. His parents... he didn't even want to think about them, or about what the Hag would say once she saw him after this. When she inevitably found out there'd be no hope. Being weak enough to let himself get captured wasn't even his first mistake this summer. And the media, if he thought the storm following the Sports Festival was bad, then how would everyone react after this? Not only was he a perfect Villain in their eyes, but actual Villains thought the same damn thing and believed it so much they decided to kidnap him over it!

Despite the quiet it was far too loud. The voice had nothing to say to argue his own thoughts, this time it only silently agreed with him. Would this be the best time to give up? If nothing else at least he'd be out of these fucking chains and maybe the forced social interaction would end too.

Katsuki remained quiet, glaring at Shigaraki, waiting for more of the same old spiel. Waiting for more words to remind him how out of everyone in the entire world, it was the worst, murderers and thieves, who were holding out a hand to him. Somehow he felt like taking that hand... even if it was going to kill him completely. If he accepted

there was no going back, there was no way he'd ever be a Hero.

He felt trapped and suddenly all too aware of the chains holding him down. He fought the urge to pull against them, knowing it would only add to the growing ache his tender joints, sore from being held in the one place for too long. The ghosts of his bruises long healed throbbed with old pain. All his suffering would be for nothing if he gave in now. But he didn't know what to do.

"Perhaps we're going about this the wrong way. Chaining you down, makes us no different than the Heroes after all. Dabi... you seem to have gotten close to him... release him."

Katsuki wasn't really listening anymore. The mere mention of getting free was sparking new hope.

The tiny flame in him flickered, blinking back to life at the thought of having a chance to blow them all to hell. Katsuki only hoped that he had enough energy and willpower left to do that. Refusing to eat and being forced to drink hadn't exactly been the best course of action but it was done now, he had to make do with what he had. If it was little he'd make the most of it.

The doubt clinging to his thoughts was difficult shake off. Knowing that at any second now his hope might be doused completely if just one little thing went wrong but if he didn't at least try then he would be just as pathetic and weak as he felt.

"No way! This kid will go for you the second he's free, you know that right?" Dabi sounded like he was joking, his tone a haughty kind of confident, but Katsuki could tell he was serious. It was strange how those words coming from someone he hardly knew were driving him in the moment. He couldn't wait to do just that, to let loose and show them just what he thought about them and their ridiculous League.

The scowl on his face deepened as he raised his head meeting with Dabi's blue gaze. The Villain looked right at him, as if asking him to think carefully about his next move. Because although he might be about to get cut loose he was still in a room surrounded by Villains; all of whom probably wouldn't need much motivating to kill him.

This was his very last chance. That's what he told himself in his effort to feed the drive to win. He was vastly outnumbered, and with the suppressors outgunned too. Even without them, the fatigue was likely to hold him back. He was going to have to dig deep to get out of this one.

As they argued he planned. He needed to be fast and decisive. A way out and a whole lot of luck is all he needed, but the likelihood of luck being on his side was next to non-existent and he knew it. He's about 80% sure there's a door behind him. Katsuki just had to hope the initial shock would be enough to buy him the time to run, because for once in his life, running didn't seem like such a bad idea.

Dabi looked back to Handsy. The masked villain clearly didn't appreciate the insubordination, whatever ranking they had within this little group was barely formed, but Shigaraki was clearly in charge. Handsy scratched at his neck, the unspoken threat of anger and action woven into the act. Dabi relented, rolling his eyes hard and Katsuki watched him round on him with a sly grin. "Twice. You untie him."

Shigaraki all but growled but seemed placated all the same, his scratching easing off a little.

"Huh? Uh Sure thing!" the spandex wearing villain dawdled towards him, cursing out the flame Villain for giving him orders, then proceeded to undo the chains all the while muttering and arguing with himself.

The locks and chains clicked one after the other. Katsuki never took his eyes of Dabi, who's cerulean gaze held his own, the smirk growing wider. It was almost as if the asshole knew what was coming, and that only added fuel to the fire. If there was something Katsuki hated being it was predictable.

The metal weights dragged across his exposed skin, hitting the floor with loud clinking and Katsuki's first instinct was to blow up, but with his instinct lately having done him wrong, he forced himself to stay put, to start bubbling like a pot about to slip over.

It was uncannily like being let out of the closet. The numbness in his limbs, the relief at being able to move of his own free will. He could feel his Quirk building in his palms already with the suppressors finally gone. He looked at his hands, saw the rough edges and frayed nails, the sweat begging to pool in his palms. The strength and power to blow away anything that opposed him gathering. The power to hurt and break and destroy. How did he ever think he'd be able to become a Hero with a power like that? Nevermind Number 1, he wasn't going to ever get a license at this rate. But he wanted it so fucking badly, was it so bad for him to want to be better than everyone thought could be? Was it so bad for him to want a simple chance of becoming better than he was?

“Kid?”

There was a hand on his shoulder, the cold seeping through the thin material of his shirt. Why the fuck did Dabi even give a damn? Icy Hot didn't give a fuck, the asshole hated him, was literally willing to lie to get rid of him, had so easily convinced everyone else he was worth hating too. And here was a Villain, someone he didn't know looking at him, acting like he'd known him for years, like he was actually concerned about him. Like he was someone worthy of being concerned for. But if, like he'd alluded, Dabi and Icy Hot were in cahoots then he couldn't trust either of them, couldn't trust anyone but himself.

Villain's don't care about people, they take what they want and hurt who ever gets in the way. Katsuki wasn't like that! He was never going to be like that again! He wasn't going to lie to get to where he wanted. He was going to be himself and going to be the *best* version of himself possible. If the world wanted to beat him down at every turn, then they could bloody well keep trying, he was going to keep getting back up until he physically couldn't stomach the thought of existing. Until there was nothing left to do but give up.

What are you doing?! Just give up! No one wants you around! No one except these Villains! Can't you see-

SHUT UP! As long as there's a chance then I'm going to try. Now get the fuck out of my head and watch me fucking win this!

The explosion surprised them all. Even Katsuki was shocked by the pure strength behind it. Dabi must have sensed it was coming because when Katsuki looked up the guy was on the other side of the room unscathed and smiling like he'd just seen the most remarkable thing ever.

Katsuki felt the adrenaline filling him up. The energy that had been buried rising to the surface. He crouched and spread his palms wide, not sparking, not wanting to waste a single drop of nitro or the chance to show these Villain's they were wrong about him. Fuck what everyone else thought, fuck what these assholes thought. He was strong, and going to get stronger, he'd become the goddamned best Hero there was and if he had to bleed and bend and break himself to get there he would.

The League was on guard now. He'd wasted the stunned shock and awe too stunned himself to run, but he'd work around it, he'd find a

way because he had to.

Toga was smirking and her fingers twitching around the blades in her grip. The Handsy fucker was standing completely aghast and clearly incensed at seeing his *mask* more than a little singed, blackened on the floor. He lifted it gently, pinky raised and dusted it off before donning the sinister accessory once more.

“Seems you still haven’t realized that you don’t really have a choice here, Bakugou Katsuki.” He mumbled, scratching even harder at the already broken skin on his neck and collarbone, streaks of red starting to decorate his pale skin. “I was trying to be reasonable. No matter, you won’t be leaving here. Maybe the Doctor will get to make use of you after all.”

“Get fucked Douchebag! You’re in my way so unless you want another blast to the face I suggest you fuck off back to whatever hole to crawled out of!”

His cheeks stretched to fit the manic grin. He ignored the tightness in every muscle as he moved; this was the most alive he’d felt in a while and he wanted to show these fucks just who they were messing with. Forget about all the bullshit at UA, the utter unfairness of life, he was Bakugou Katsuki and he wasn’t going to break over something as laughable as this pathetic group before him.

If his memory served correct, they’d been granted permission to fight, and days since that order or not, Katsuki was running with the idea that it still applied.

“Don’t be so foolish, you’re outnumbered and low level. You don’t stand a chance against my team.” Shigaraki spat, still scratching away at his own flesh, scarred tissue breaking in earnest and new wounds opening to join the old.

Tch. Katsuki wasn’t in the mood to listen. He’d been in those suppressors for days, he wasn’t about to lie back now that he was equipped to fight back again. Unlucky for them this dingy little bar was warm and that was only helping him make more sweat.

With his hands literally dripping, Katsuki grasped the biological trigger in his hold and ignored the trembling in his bones. Handsy frowned, he couldn’t really see it but he was sure the fucker was definitely more than a little pissed with him. Perfect. He knew from his own experience that pissed meant irrational and irrational typically lead to stupid ass decisions.

“Fine then. Compress, put him under again.”

Top Hat barely got to take a whole two steps before several things happened all at once.

There was a knock on the door and a muffled line of speech that Katsuki couldn't hear over the sound of his own explosion blasting in response to the fucker stepping towards him. But even that blast was drowned out by the sound of the wall to his left practically turning to dust and the following cry of *'I am Here!'*

ALL MIGHT?!

The air pressure knocked him off his feet, he'd barely registered the fact that it was in fact All Might, didn't get a chance to compute the fact that the Bastards were wrong about no one coming for him. Didn't have a reason to hold on to his fragile hope when the feeling of something tight started winding its way around his body, holding him down making it hard to breath.

FUCK! NO! I JUST GOT FREE! FUCK!!!! NO!

See, told you this would happen.

“Lacquered Chain Prison!” came another voice he actually recognised. Pro Hero Kamui Woods, All Might didn't come alone.

Katsuki gasped for even the smallest breath as the room came to life. He was being pressed into the floor, the hardwood sticky against his cheek as he struggled. From his place on the floor he could see Handsy and a few of the others in the league, bound just the same. Vines of dark wood thick and growing tighter wrapped around them. Kurogiri and Dabi out for the count. Then who was holding him down?

He darted his eyes to All Might. His Idol standing tall and proud and looking at him with a look he could only describe as pure disappointment. It didn't suit the Hero, the smile he usually donned down turned into a grimace and Katsuki hated even more that it was directed at him and was slowly devolving into pity.

I'm not weak. Don't look at me like that! I'm not one of them... Don't just ignore me like last time. Help me... please...

“...please...”

He didn't want to remember. Didn't want to be reminded of the

crowd, the chains, the way All Might left him there with an unwanted medal in his mouth; a foul taste that lingered for days after. But he couldn't stop the memories flooding in, couldn't stop the taste of copper and defeat, the feeling of failure so overwhelming he couldn't stop himself from sparking off explosion after explosion as he descended into panic. The wooden binds started getting tighter as he struggled, attempting to free himself and rid himself of this humiliation.

"Kamui-san, perhaps--"

"All Might! Focus! This is the League of Villains!"

Katsuki couldn't breathe. They were lumping him in with these fuckers too?! He wasn't a fucking Villain! He had been mere seconds away from showing the League just how serious he was about being a Hero. Would nothing ever go right for him?! Was it too much to ask that one little thing go right?! What was the fucking point in wasting the energy in doing anything at all if it always went to shit?!

If the Number One Hero thinks you're a villain then it must be true!

The world was a blurred mess before him, he felt like he was going to throw up. No, he *was* throwing up. The burn of acid and bile crawled up his throat and passed his lips tasting like ash. Then it was covering his face and he yelped as he fell.

The sharp edges of gravel and rubble below him ached and Katsuki didn't care. His world was falling apart more completely than ever before only halted by a cold chill in the air sending the hair on his neck to standing. Worlds different from the chill Icy Hot was good at projecting. This was... evil. Intentional, but had no true direction. It simply existed to strike fear in anything and everything around it, and Katsuki... he could definitely feel it.

"Bakugou Katsuki. Pleasure to finally meet the one my Student sees so much promise in."

"Sensei!"

Katsuki turned from his spot on the ground, dusty with rubble and mud. What he saw, he hated to admit, had him trembling where he sat, hacking up a lung and desperate to clear his airways. Their conversation went over his head until...

"Take him with you Tomura. I trust what you've seen in this one."

Keep trying, I'm sure he'll hear you."

Katsuki rushed to his feet barely able to stay standing as Handsy turned on him.

"Stay... the fuck away from me!" he growled through raspy breaths, his throat still clogged with whatever the fuck that shit was, burning and making it hard to get air. He'd had enough of not being able to breath.

Handsy stalked forward, Toga giggling manically behind him. That Twice fucker arguing with himself about what the best way of grabbing him was. Crusty and Warp Gate still out for the count thankfully. They had him surrounded again and he didn't even feel like fighting. That rush he'd felt not too long ago was gone. He just wanted it all to end. He just wanted to curl up and disappear. Maybe... perhaps giving up might be the best option he had right now. The only option...

A crack of thunder sounded in the cloudless sky. Something like the sound of a missile drew nearer and the following collision sent upturned debris into the air. The force sent him and the League of Pawns to their asses.

Katsuki watched as his Idol Hero went toe-to-toe with what he could only call evil incarnate. It was insane to witness, the raw power and strength the both of them possessed seeping into the atmosphere. And even then Katsuki could tell that All Might wasn't fighting at his full strength and with the dangerous debris getting kicked up by just this level of power he knew why.

Whether All Might thought he was a Villain or not, Katsuki was in the way. He was holding back the Number one Hero from doing his job because he was frozen still, too stunned by the fact that any of this was happening to even think about moving. Nor could he sense the danger right behind him. Not until it grabbed him by the collar.

"Move brat!"

Instinct would normally tell him to yield to the force dragging him away, it was something he'd only ever associated with the Hag. His mother had zero qualms with manhandling him, had been doing it for as long as he can remember. But that instinct was overridden when he heard the gruff male voice demanding he move. So he moved, probably not in the way whoever was pulling him away from the fight wanted him to though.

Ignoring the aches still present in his arms Katsuki reached behind him and without meaning to let off the biggest explosion he could manage. And then another and another. At first they only tightened their hold until finally they loosened only to yank him forward all but growling at him.

Icy blue eyes, lit with an immeasurable rage, met his own. Yellow and orange flames dancing about the scowl looming over him. Endeavour was all the more terrifying up close, not that Katsuki would ever admit that the Hero was terrifying, at least not in any normal circumstance. But right now, with the sheer size of the man, the massive hands close to choking and all of him radiating heat and flames that weren't not helping things on the Explosion side, Katsuki was terrified.

Didn't matter how much he wanted to stop, his palms were slicking with sweat just as fast as the sparks were lighting. He felt like a kid again, hopelessly failing to do what was asked of him. Failing to be the perfect little boy his mother needed him to be.

Katsuki tried to tear himself away but Endeavour held fast as he continued to walk. He was aware he was making some attempt at telling the Hero to fuck off, to let go, the heat was only making this worse for them both. The inane screeching and growling he was making clearly wasn't getting the message across and Endeavour wasn't appreciating it one bit.

"Enough. You should be grateful I'm even bothering with you."

Katsuki didn't get any time to process the words. Not when Endeavour practically throwing him the rest of the way across the battlefield. He didn't expect to land in the arms of some no name sidekick he didn't recognise, their Quirk wasn't obvious not that it really mattered.

"Take him away." Endeavour growled before turning back on the ensuing battle.

The sidekick held him up and at arm's length as they moved further and further away from the chaos. Katsuki felt himself slowly coming back to the present, his explosions dulling but showing no signs of stopping. He pushed himself off the Hero only to collapse seconds later in a heap of rubble and debris, pretty certain that his internal organs were shifted to different places than the usual. His head was spinning. He didn't have a chance to recover his bearings before heaved and then promptly vomited, for real this time. He half

expected to see dregs of black, or maybe even the grey-green of the sludge he'd thrown up for days following the Sludge incident again. His hands were still sparkly wildly as he coughed and hacked for what felt like forever, at least until much gentler hands eased small suppressor bracelets around his wrists before helping him up.

He blinked and he was sitting in the back of an ambulance, a pair of Paramedics working on him in silence. The odd looks they gave him somewhere between disgust and pity. Katsuki was too busy trying to figure out what the fuck had just happened. What was still happening.

Had he been arrested? Or where the bracelets just for his overloaded Quirk? If not now, then *when* was he going to be arrested? He felt like he'd done something unforgiveable.

Still, counter to what the League had told him, the Pro's had shown up. Only getting him back hadn't been the objective clearly. This offensive was likely only meant to put a stop to whatever the League was up to. Katsuki's wellbeing had never been a concern had it?

And then the words Endeavour all but growled at him replayed on loop.

'...be grateful I'm even bothering with you.'

Yeah, why would anyone want to bother with filth like you?

Katsuki didn't argue because that's what he was right? Trash, pathetic and worthless. So weak that he let himself get captured in the first place. So Villainous that real Villains saw his potential as a new member in their freakshow club.

What is the point anymore? Nothing I do works.

There is no point. This is game over so just accept it.

The Medic made a tentative grab for his face and Katsuki flinched. The Medic flinched too. Their partner sighed, clicking the small torch in her hand off, before explaining. "We need to check you're not concussed."

Why bother wasting the time and effort? There are more important people than me that need your

help. People that are hurt because of me...

Exactly, you shouldn't be wasting everyone's valuable time.

"I'm fine." He told them. Volume barely above a whisper. Before he tried to stand up to walk himself out the woman grabbed him forcing him back to the seat.

"Ah, ah. Not until we're done."

Why does no one ever listen to me?!

"There's no point. I told you I'm fine. They didn't hurt me."

He jumped out the ambulance before she could stop him this time. He could hear her calling after him but didn't regard it in the slightest. He drifted almost thoughtlessly, the sound of thunder and crashing very clear from not so far away. And then it stopped. The wind died down to calm and Katsuki paused.

The streets were in chaos around him, civilians in the hundreds maybe thousands filling the streets. And yet it was silent. He wondered how many of them agreed with what the Villain's thought about him, how many of them would agree he was a Villain if he asked them. He'd be an idiot to even try to ask, for ever thinking there was anything good in him.

He stood, blind to anything and deaf to whatever was happening until shouting nearby startled him into consciousness.

"GO ALL MIGHT!"

"YOU CAN DO IT!"

"I BELIEVE IN YOU ALL MIGHT!"

"KICK HIS ASS ALL MIGHT!"

Katsuki wanted to know why they were all suddenly screaming. Was... was All Might losing? He... he couldn't lose, All Might never loses. His feet began to carry him towards the crowd even while the wretched voices tried to convince him otherwise. There was nothing he could do, this was all happening because of him anyway.

He never did reach the crowd, however. A firm hand on his shoulder held him back and he turned to see a Police Officer frowning down at him, the Paramedic he'd bailed on behind him, frowning just as deep.

"Come with me, kid." He said, and with no fathomable reason or

strength to deny him, Katsuki went.

Chapter End Notes

There are some things i might alter about this, mainly towards the end, because i have two ways this could go from here and i'm not decided on which yet :)

So what did you think? Angsty enough? Don't worry it will eventually get better, he's about due a break. Let me know in the comments and i'll try to get back you in a timely manner this time :)

Hope you enjoyed it either way :)

Follow of twitter for random updates and stuff :)
<https://twitter.com/SuperiorKats>

Spiral

Chapter Summary

In the aftermath of Kamino Katsuki starts to wonder what's next for him. Izuku is pissed and rightfully so.

Chapter Notes

Hi, long time no see, i had aimed for posting a lot sooner, but i got sick and didn't want to rush it. Once I was feeling better I had intended to post last weekend but I completely misjudged my ability to proofread under a self-imposed time limit :)

Anyway here it is after months. Hopefully it will be worth the wait.

Let me know what you think, or if there's anything you want to see happen at all. While I do have my own plans for what coming I like to hear from you all too :)

Anyway, please enjoy. Chapter warnings in no particular order are as follows;
suicidal ideation, self-deprecation, child abuse, canon-typical violence, swearing.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Izuku wasn't exactly sure how he was supposed to feel right now but he guessed that the sensation of overwhelming anger and rage filling him from head to toe was entirely justifiable. Anyone in his position would have to feel that way after what he'd just experienced. What little hope he'd still held for his *friends* still meaning well and wanting to help him was gone. Snuffed out like the weak flickering flame it had been from the second he'd first had reason to doubt them. He was surprised by how little time it had taken.

It had been himself, Tokoyami and Todoroki against dwindling odds. They'd hopped on the next train to Kamino Ward, and after the hour long commute they spent a while running the streets following the blinking dot of the tracker. Todoroki had suggested they keep a low profile, stick to quieter streets, but given the urgency Izuku chose to ignore his suggestions instead pushing on through bustling crowds.

The second he'd felt the first quake beneath his feet from far away, in the opposite direction to where they were heading, his gut dropped and twisted simultaneously. To the point he was actually quite surprised he hadn't just keeled over in shock from how intense and abrupt the prospect of certain failure was. He could understand his classmates not wanting him to get hurt, could even understand them being a little over-protective, but he couldn't for the life of him figure how they thought any of this could be for the best.

Izuku had spun on the spot before the next tremor came and using the thick tunnels of smoke rising across the city of Yokohama as his guide, he started moving back on himself. Much more reliable than the clearly tampered with tracker in his hand. There was little time to spend thinking about everything before he took another step and launched into a Quirk powered leap. The force would have snapped his bones on the spot had he been any less focused on the fact he *needed* to be in one piece when he got there. He *needed* to be ready to grab Kacchan if the Pro's hadn't already.

The brief flicker of shock on Todoroki's face as he passed him was no surprise. The only thought his mind had been able to form when the split-second realisation hit him was that once again he'd allowed his trusting nature to be used against him. He'd been too hopeful to think this wasn't just another way to placate his worrying and keep him out of trouble... and now Kacchan was going to pay for their selfishness.

Izuku cursed as the whistle of wind passed his ears not nearly fast enough, hopping through streets and over cars and civilians in his way. Screw Quirk laws this was more important! Arriving at the scene didn't settle his nerves, not with the sight of massing crowds held back by police and Heroes. Their roaring din of shouting was nothing compared to the static in his head as all he was focused on was finding Kacchan.

He burst his way through the crowd, pushing past anyone and everyone, ignorant of them scolding his rudeness. He didn't care if he got recognised at this point, he had one goal and that's all that mattered to him.

Reaching the end of the crowd he was met with a blockade of police tape. Beyond that was a mess of police cars and ambulances in disarray. In the distance, honestly not far away enough, the crashes and booms of battle continued. There was no sign of Kacchan, even as he broke through the barrier ignoring the disgruntled cries of a few nearby Heroes. Running this way and that, Izuku searched and

dodged, calling out for his childhood friend and only stopping when an eery silence took over. His Mentor's voice, *All Might's* voice, filled the quiet, announcing to the world his time was over. "*It's your turn.*"

Izuku stayed frozen where he stood glancing back and forth across the field of chaos around him. Battling with his mind he was decided All Might could wait, Kacchan was the one he'd come here for. He was desperate in his search for any sign of Kacchan, looking left and right for any hint of a head of spiky blonde hair. From the safe zone behind him the crowd screamed and cheered for their Hero and all Izuku wanted was to see his childhood friend. To see him well and alive, unharmed and scowling, shouting about how he was a '*stupid nerd*' like he always did. He scoped the area in vain as everything carried on around him. What he wouldn't give to know if All Might and the other Hero's had already saved Kacchan.

Though he knew very well there was a chance that Kacchan was safe, he couldn't help but feel like he wasn't. If he'd gotten here sooner, if he'd just left the hospital without all the fanfare of getting help, he might have reached here faster. Might have been able to see them save him. But what if the League still had Kacchan? What if he was trapped beneath a sea of rubble struggling to breath? What if... what if... Izuku couldn't deal with not having an answer, he needed to know.

It was all too much all at once and when Todoroki put his hand on his shoulder to reassure him Izuku couldn't help but lash out, shoving him away. Angry as was Izuku's eyes welled with tears at being incapable of saving even one person, and not just any person. He couldn't save Kacchan. He could only hope All Might and the other Pros were able to find him before it all went south. He ignored everything as Police and Pros surrounded them telling them to step back, ignored when Tokoyami suggested they do as they say. Couldn't hold back his rage again when Todoroki dared to do the same; dared to even pretend like he understood what this meant for Izuku. He hadn't even realized he was swinging his fist until Todoroki was backing up one hand raised to placate him, the other rubbing a reddening jaw.

Even now sitting in the back of a police car, crushed against the door with Tokoyami in the middle of them, his knuckles ached and throbbed. If he was being honest, Izuku doesn't think he punched Todoroki hard enough. His *friend* had barely stumbled under the force of it. The only reason he didn't go for a second was because the nearby Pro's and Officer's had finally put two and two together, recognising them and acting quickly. Izuku huffed and tried to argue as they were

ushered away from the scene, though overhearing that Aizawa-sensei had called ahead after realizing they were missing at the hospital did have a pang of short-lived guilt hitting him. It couldn't compete with the guilt of everything else.

Trying to contain this frustration was new and exhausting for him. It wasn't something he normally held on to, when he ever felt this way before there was always an easy way to fix it. Before there had always been something bright and beaming to blind him to the darkness. Right now, both his beacons were gone. And all he wanted was to know where Kacchan was. Was he alright? Did they succeed? Did the Villain's still have him? Had they escaped with him? Had Kacchan been hurt in the battle? Was he stuck out there, alone and too hurt to help himself?

So many questions, all unanswered and pushed to the wayside as the gravity of what his classmates had been doing to his childhood friend finally had a chance to settle in properly. Kacchan was strong, the strongest person he knew (after All Might at his peak); but even he was bound to crack under such persistent cruelty. Izuku felt like an idiot for ignoring his gut feeling.

Kacchan was rough around the edges and determined to a fault. He spoke his thoughts as he saw fit, usually blunt to point; anything he said ended up sounding insulting even when it wasn't. From a distance you'd never think he was struggling. But Izuku knew him and he knew Kacchan was good at hiding his hurt behind the gruff façade. He never really meant the bad even when it was said in retaliation. Izuku knew that. It might have taken long time for him to realize it but Kacchan very much wore his emotions on his sleeve. It was easy to tell when he was at peace, enjoying himself without giving too much away. And when his annoyance and aggression increased, it always meant something was wrong. For all of that to suddenly disappear, he imagined it could only mean it was worse than simply wrong. And he'd been stupid enough to think it was nothing.

It was taking everything scrap of self-control he had left not to burst through the car door and go dig through the rubble himself to find Kacchan now. He just *needed* to know he was okay. His thoughts, however, were rudely interrupted by the last person he wanted to listen to.

"Midoriya...?" it took everything to ignore the pleading tone. Ignoring it was against everything he'd ever thought about being a Hero. Every bone in his body wanted to listen, wanted to hear him out, was

clawing at the ashes of hope that it was a misunderstanding, but there was a darker more honest part of him that didn't trust himself not to snap and show Todoroki just how he truly felt. "Please. Talk to me, Midoriya."

"Right now, the last thing I want is to *talk* to *you*, Todoroki-kun. So, just... don't."

Tokoyami sits silent and brooding between them. His arms folded across himself, eyes closed as he tried to maintain his own calm breathing. He acted as a barrier, one Izuku was grateful for, if not for his stoic presence he was certain he'd have responded a little more... physically.

The flashing of red emergency lights outside from ambulances, police cars and fire trucks alike, were blinding as he turned to stare outside trying to convince himself of a more positive outcome. For every positive his mind supplied several deprecating negatives came in tow. How had he not seen this sooner is what he keeps coming back to. How had he allowed himself to be so complacent while Kacchan so clearly struggled and tried to carry on like nothing had changed, like it was normal?

He shouldn't blame himself, it wasn't *his* fault. But he can't help but think if he'd pushed Kacchan a little harder or been more ready to accept the idea that even good people do bad things... if he'd followed his gut feeling maybe this night and the few nights prior would have played out vastly different.

It's not hard to let his mind wander as the officers saddled with the task of getting them home get into the car and set off. What is hard, it not asking them too many questions. So hard in fact he doesn't try to stop himself. The first and most pressing of his questions, the one he wants answered most of all is the first he asks of course.

"Did they get Kacchan back?!" Izuku all but shouts at the Officers. The one sat in the driver seat squints puzzled at him through the rear view mirror.

"Bakugou... did they get Bakugou back?" Tokoyami reiterates for him. It had never occurred to him to call Kacchan by his known name.

The Officer seems to frown at them, if he knew the man at all he might say he was annoyed at them. They get nothing more than a huff and a shallow nod in response. Those for the next few seconds the Officer seems to forget they exist at all as he starts driving with a little

more intensity than legally safe. Izuku notices his fists clenching around the wheel as his partner remains silent beside him. That simple nod wasn't enough for him.

"Where is he? Is he okay? Did the League hurt him? What happened to the League? Wh--"

"Look kid, we're just here to take you home. What they do to Villains isn't our concern... nor is it yours."

Izuku didn't think he could feel any more angry right now but the unspoken words in that sentence spoke volumes to him. What they do to *Villain's* might not be his concern right now, but what they do to Kacchan is another thing entirely. Everything about Kacchan is of concern to him right now. It's worrying that even those in a position meant to protect them were thinking the same things as his classmates, or worse in this case. The fact they were lumping Kacchan in with the League told him all he needed to know about their stance. Sure he can see how they might reach that conclusion. Doesn't mean he likes or agrees with it.

Tokoyami is the one who holds him back as he leans forward to snap the Officers. The gentle shake of his feathered head is somehow enough to calm him to the point of slumping back and returning to glare out at the scenery passing them by. Rows of apartments and flats, calm empty streets. It's as if nothing had happened at all. It was unnerving. Terrifying to him that while All Might's reign as Number 1 had come to an end, most people were sleeping soundly, unaware of that they would wake tomorrow to a whole new world. Izuku knows what it means for him, if the weight of the expectation on his shoulders hadn't been so heavy before he'd wouldn't have noticed just how heavy it was now. And Kacchan... he just hoped he was okay wherever they had him. Not knowing was making his guts turn painfully.

The first of them to get dropped off was Tokoyami, he didn't live too far from Kamino apparently; but still within Musutafu's limits, so it made sense to go their first. He lived in a modest looking apartment complex, and he looked regretful as he got out (Izuku stepping out himself to let him pass).

"I'm sorry we didn't get there in time." Tokoyami told him. Izuku didn't blame *him*. "I know you likely think Todoroki did this on purpose... but try not to kill him before we find out the truth. He seems genuinely upset about all this."

Izuku couldn't help but tsk at the sentiment, "I... I understand that, but I'm not just going forget about everything else because of this."

"I understand also, but he was just as surprised as both of us when the tracker turned out to be wrong. If he got it from Momo, perhaps she altered it without him knowing?"

Of course, that could be a possibility, but Izuku was tired of considering everything, he wanted answers. A simple yes or no. He didn't want to be asking questions forever. But he also didn't want to fall into the same pit of assumptions as his classmates.

"Yeah, I suppose." The Officer behind them clearing his throat to prompt them to hurry up their chat was the only reason he turned back to the car. "Stay safe, Tokoyami."

"Try not to get in any more trouble in the meantime, Midoriya." he just had to laugh at that. "And if you hear anything about Bakugou be sure to let me know."

Izuku steeled himself at the request, nodding. Of all his classmates so far, Tokoyami was the one he held most trust in. The only one he could see actively trying to mend his mistakes. He hoped in time he would see the same from the others. With one last wave he turned back to the car.

Izuku sat back in his seat as one Officer escorted Tokoyami to his home. The other was dozing in the front seat like this was just another day. He supposed it might be but still, it angered him how complacent everyone was being.

"Midoriya?" Izuku made sure to show just how annoyed he was, petty as it was turning away from him with a huff was all he could do. "Believe me, I didn't know the tracker was tampered with. I *wanted* to help you, I *thought* I was helping you. If I'd known I would have told you."

"Would you? You'd tell me just like you told everyone about me and Kacchan?!" the silence is deafening. The plain expression on Todoroki's face more angering than anything right now; his reddening cheek not looking red enough all of a sudden.

"I did that to protect you."

"Protect me?! From what?! I told you *everything*, I explained how complicated it was between me and Kacchan hoping you'd understand

just like you trusted me understand what you told me about Endeavour!" he pauses to calm himself, he doesn't want to do this here, it's far from ideal, but if he could vent a little now so Todoroki has something to think about then he'd let himself slip.

"Protect you from Bakugou! I couldn't just let him keep hurting you!" Todoroki glares at him, his voice pitching higher, not shouting but louder and more insistent for it.

"The only one hurting me is you! I *trusted* you with that, I thought you'd understand. That you wouldn't tell anyone. I haven't told anyone about what you confided in me."

"That's different."

"Really? I don't think it is. The only difference I'm seeing is that instead of respecting mine and Kacchan's privacy you decided to make a problem that wasn't yours, or even a problem in the first place, blow way out of proportion!"

"I did it to protect you! My situation is in the past, he's still bullying you! You said so yourself, he told you to kill yourself just last year!"

"AND THAT WAS BETWEEN ME AND KACCHAN!" he can feel himself shaking. The Officer in front snorts and shifts in his seat at the sudden volume. Izuku almost doesn't want to stay quiet but he clenches his fists to hold himself back all the same. Breathing deep he holds back the crackle of OFA as it blinks to life. "Todoroki, I don't want to talk about this right now. I don't trust myself to not hit you again. If you can't see what's wrong with what you did, then maybe you aren't who I thought you were."

"Midoriya..."

"Stop. Just... stop. I don't want to hear it. You were the one that told me that I should show what I meant through my actions and not just my words. Until you can show me you understand... I don't want anything to do with you. And if you so much as breath around Kacchan... just... make sure you don't hurt him anymore."

With that Izuku turned back to the window, waiting impatiently for the other Officer to come back and drop him home. If he was right about where they were, he was the next closest so it wouldn't take too long. Truthfully, he couldn't wait to get home, and while seeing his mother was top of his list, the thought that he could ask her about Kacchan was up there too. She and Auntie Mitsuki were still close, had

been since forever. It always baffled him how the two became close friends being such opposites, but like his mother always said opposites do attract. Just like him and Kacchan. They couldn't be more different and yet so drawn together. Even if the world was hellbent on keeping them apart.

Todoroki thankfully was silent for the short journey from Tokoyami's to his own home. There were moments where it looked like he was going to say something, where Izuku could feel the tenseness rolling off him as he probably tried to find the right words to articulate an argument. Before long they were stopping outside his own apartment building. He didn't need to be told to get out and once he was out in the early morning air taking a deep breath he felt a little of his frustration dissipate and he felt lighter for it. No less worried or worked up overall, but light enough to the point he might be able to sleep a little.

The Officer was already walking ahead of him when Izuku stopped at hearing his name called. It was reflexive, stopping when a *friend* called him. He turned to meet the heterochromatic gaze locked on him through an open window. Seconds passed in silence as they just stared at each other, Izuku daring him to say something and Todoroki clearly weighing up the worth of the words he'd say.

"I didn't intend to hurt him, I was just doing what I thought was right... to keep you safe."

Izuku waited a beat for more, for an apology, for some justification that would help him understand why he and the rest of the class went to such lengths for him. If this had been about Villain's, or someone stalking him, yeah he'd be able to get behind that. But this was Kacchan they'd targeted. A fellow classmate. Todoroki's words had managed to turn everyone, even those Izuku had considered good for him, against Kacchan and that he wouldn't forgive so easily.

In all the years Izuku had known him, Kacchan had never delt well with people abandoning him. They grew up together and people would come and go, and Kacchan was always the one who got hurt most by it. He always seemed so convinced it was his fault they left in the first place. Izuku supposes that's why he tried so hard to stay by his side, because while everyone else moved on, it always left him and Kacchan together. It hadn't got any better at the beginning of their teens.

People tended to just up and leave Kacchan by himself at a moment's

notice. Sure they'd follow him around, blow up his ego and say how awesome he was, but when push came to shove and Kacchan got himself into something complicated they'd turn the other way. At time's Izuku was certain that Kacchan was just as lonely as him. Kids flocked to him, enticed by his explosive confidence but they were just as quick to leave him to fend for himself too. There were many times when classmates all through their school years would come in after the weekends talking about the fun things they got up to. Kacchan was never a part of those conversations. He'd stopped getting asked to go to them after a few too many no's, and Izuku got by on the titbits he overheard. It wasn't initially clear that Kacchan wasn't going; he'd always had that air of not caring when others were talking, he wasn't one for small talk or gossip, so it made sense he didn't take part. No, Izuku found out people were just leaving him out one day (after years of just accepting it as the norm) by overhearing those who he thought were Kacchan's friends talk about the blond behind his back.

He's an ass, so up himself he can't even tell we just keep him around for the free muscle, ha!

If he hears you say that he'll kick your ass next.

Like he'd find out, he never hangs out, always too busy with his special quirk classes or those fancy parties his rich parents put on. What a dork.

Least he's got a Quirk, unlike that Quirkless Loser Deku...

Hearing them laugh about him and Kacchan in the same sentence ignited something in him that day. Before he knew it he was standing up to them, of course it hadn't lasted long and he'd ended up on his ass with Kacchan looming over him and threatening explosive action. The jerks that had just moments ago been dragging his name through the mud now cheering and goading him on. And he didn't have the heart to tell Kacchan when he saw just how awkwardly at home he looked from afar... even if it was a lie.

It was only after the Sludge Villain that Izuku realised how little Kacchan truly meant to them. After that day they were both one and the same, alone and focused on their own goals. Maybe he should have tried harder to reach out, but challenging him by continuing to aim for UA had been all he was capable of then.

At UA, he thought it would be different, it *had* been different, but know he knew. It hadn't taken nearly as long but Kacchan's *friends* turned on him, just like back then. It incited the same feeling as

before, the need to stand up for Kacchan when no one else would. He was stronger now, he wouldn't end up knocked back this time. Seeing Kacchan pretend like it was nothing at all to him when it was obvious it was hurting him had gone on long enough.

The tiny fact that because he'd thought to place trust in the wrong person, Kacchan was paying for it, just made it all the worse. It was being used against him, both of them. Kacchan was being alienated and Izuku, his classmates were wrapping him up in bubble wrap. He'd take any of those days past with Kacchan over how useless he's felt around them lately. As it was he didn't care for the sentiment in Todoroki's words. Just like Todoroki had told him at camp, his true intentions would be shown through his actions.

Izuku regarded him plainly, trying hard not to betray any emotion on his face. He was disappointed that it took all this for him realize what was happening, to realize that maybe it was the people closest to him responsible. He shook his head and sighed before walking off down the familiar path and up the stairs he'd scaled for years, forcing himself to keep his gaze forward and not look back. If he really wanted Todoroki to think hard about this he couldn't let himself give in to conscience telling to help.

He reunited with the Officer about halfway up, the man clearly hadn't even noticed he'd not been there for a while. But it was almost all forgotten when less than a minute later he set eyes on that pale blue door marking his home. The sight had him tearing up before it was even knocked. Seeing his mother all but tear the door from the hinges not even a second later had him crying in earnest.

Izuku all but threw himself into her arms, allowing himself to be swamped in her scent; the floral air around her relaxing him leagues better than anything else could right now. Though it was still shy of complete respite. Both Midoriya's were sobbing messes, and Izuku didn't care, didn't want to let go. It felt like a lifetime since he'd last seen her and their brief phone call hadn't been enough. Her small hands clutched at him, and he came close to crushing her under his own desperate need to be comforted. He'd failed tonight, failed to do the one thing he'd set out to do. He had to wonder if he'd even been capable in the first place, with or without the dozen spanners thrown in the works.

The Officer cleared his throat, bidding them a good day which went completely ignored as his mother without even a word closed the door and lead him towards their cosy living room. Finally, they were alone

and safe. Izuku continued to sob, gasped and gurned just letting out all his frustration. They sat together in relative quiet, the only sound the sniffing and sobbing from both of them.

He's not sure how long passed just sitting there, an hour maybe two, but his mom didn't move to let go even once. If anything she just held him tighter.

It was well into the morning now, the dark of the early hours given way to the pale light of day. Izuku pulled himself together as best he could, brushing away stubborn tears and looked at up his mom. She looked as exhausted as he felt. Eyes bloodshot red and puffy, damp tracks clear on her soft cheeks. He doesn't need to ask to know she'd probably been crying since all this started. Bad as it sounds, he's glad in a way, he knows it's his fault she's in tears but it shows him she cares. That she worries. It was never a doubt in his head but seeing it with his own two eyes after learning of much deceit makes it feel all the more real.

Her focused might be on him but he had to ask her, needed to know... if she'd heard anything.

"M-mom... Kacchan... have you heard anything from Auntie?"

The timid smile on her plump face faded to something pained as she shook her head. "I tried calling her and Masaru myself, but there was no answer. Hopefully she got my messages. I'd hate for Katsuki to be alone after all this..."

Izuku clenched his fists, glaring down at them and the ugly scars crossing his knuckles. All the strength All Might gave him and he couldn't even save one person. He hated the fact that he still didn't know exactly where Kacchan was; whether with the Heroes or Police. The way things were one was likely just as bad as the other, and if that was the case then, like his mom just suggested, Kacchan literally had no one right now.

"Mom, they- they think he helped them. They think Kacchan is one of the Villains... b-but he's not, h-he's not. I know he's not! They hate him... they all... they-"

Between all his sniffing he managed to get his words out and then just a suddenly he was being embraced again. His mother holding him tighter and rubbing warming circles into his back in reassurance. She had nothing to say and so said nothing. Izuku let himself fall apart again, bawling in her hold as he tried to make himself hope for the

best outcome. Hoped that Auntie was aware and was on her way to put anyone who doubted Kacchan in their place. That Kacchan was safe as he could be. That there was someone else out there on Kacchan's side.

Katsuki thought he was already deeply familiar with the dreadful feeling of emptiness. Believed that it couldn't get any worse, that he was used to it after years of not amounting to anything despite his efforts. But the black hole consuming him right now stood to disprove that. He only wished it would hurry up and swallow him whole.

The world around him had become nothing more than a blur. A hazy muted mess beyond his ability to comprehend that was honestly of so little concern to him he didn't bother to try making sense of it. After blindly following the unnamed Officer to his car Katsuki found himself left alone in the back seat to spiral along with his thoughts. He watched through the window as emergency lights flashed incessantly, all the while Police and Heroes kept the media and curious civilians away. Which wasn't too hard since they all seemed more interested in whatever it was going on with All Might. The thought of that just made the ever-growing sinking feel multiply.

What is because of him? Because he'd froze on the battlefield? Because he was so incompetent that doing a single thing right was beyond him? No one answered him, and deep down he knew he already had an answer to those questions anyway.

He barely noticed when they were leaving the scene then all at once arriving at the nearest station a safe distance away from the ongoing battle, whether it was over now or not wasn't something he needed to know. Once inside he was passed from Officer to Officer, room to room, more times than he cared to keep track of. Little to no care was taken to ensure he was comfortable, not that Katsuki was even aware of the things going on around him to actually notice. His eyes were open but not seeing. His mind too busy trying to make sense of all that had just happened to spare even a second to focus on the ever

changing surroundings. No one spoke to him, rather they talked at him, around him and all of them about him but he found he didn't mind so much, not when it all sounded like static to his ears. He'd rather not be privy to their insults as they manhandled him and treated him worse than the dirt on their shoes. Like the Villain they all saw him as. Like the villain he so clearly was.

Until he'd been left to sit in a secluded hall, far from everyone and watched by pair of young Officers who pretended he wasn't there at all, Katsuki hadn't had a chance to really process it all.

Most of his time he spent simply trying not to break down. Desperately clutching at any little reason as why this wasn't the worst thing to ever happen to him, why it couldn't be the thing that breaks him after everything else he'd been through. There had to be some silver lining to this, something that was worth clinging to, he just had to find it.

The realization that he should be safe now being away from the League dawns on him, though he doesn't feel safe at all. Not with how dire the situation is. The burning behind his eyes threatens to spill over time and time again as memories of blurry faces come and go, each looking down on him with some level of disgust. He can't stand to look at them, can't do anything other than sit there waiting for whatever's coming next.

Katsuki's not entirely sure what there is left for him to cling onto to stop himself from falling apart but he's certain the itch of needing to contain the Explosion even despite the Quirk restraints already doing that is in part responsible for his continued façade of calm. He bit his lip, managing somehow to keep a face of stony indifference. All the sounds of the crowd cheering on his Hero, encouraging All Might to win, echoed nonstop in the confines of his mind. It cut through him, over and over, on loop. And he couldn't shake it. Not with the world slowly coming back to him. Not while the look of such blatant disappointment on All Might's face tormented him.

Time passed and with his head becoming clearer, he was forced to take in the space around him. Anything to distract himself, even a little bit. But even that was a fool's errand as he grew more aware of the harsh, indifferent words the Officers uttered as they stood guard. Wishing he could go back to that blissful static was a hopeless task too.

How long it had been at this point was anyone's guess. Just like with

the League time was again immeasurable. Katsuki was aware he was still sitting in some kind of waiting room. Short rows of chairs where lined up along the walls, a small table in the middle; no magazines or anything remotely welcoming to be seen, just a few synthetic potted plants meant to give the place some semblance of life.

There were of course the two officers standing by the only apparent way into the space. Katsuki stared, almost vacantly at them before his gazed lingered and fixated on the signs posted on the wall across from him. It had taken a while longer but eventually his vision cleared fully and he was able to read the bold printed text saying *Interrogation room 1*. And that's all he needed to surmise what was coming next.

They would pull him into that room, talk down to him until they got what they wanted. Not stopping until he'd either admitted his guilt or talked himself into a corner. Whichever came first. And saying nothing wasn't an option, it would probably make look just as guilty. Yet with how devoid of anything he felt right now, and how dim his reality has become, he didn't think he'd be able to find the words to defend himself. He sorely doubted, would be surprised actually, if he got out of here scott free.

Katsuki found he didn't really care about all that. Didn't care that he didn't feel like talking or fighting this. He was tired of fighting and it all being for nothing. His entire life had been spent giving his all to be one way and always turning out the other. If he'd been better or tried harder then none of this would have happened at all. Things would be so much better if he'd never gone to UA, if he'd decided to be anything other than a Hero.

Still, through the rising chaos in his mind he continued to dig for a reason to keep trying, he didn't want to feel this way; like the empty hollow being he was right now. He didn't want to give up after putting in all that work, after trying so hard. He wanted to wipe that horrid look off All Might's face, wanted the Hero to look at him the same way he looked at Deku, and the rest of his classmates... like he was someone worth investing in, like he was someone that could be a great Hero. Like he was someone worth saving...

Any time Katsuki found himself close to an idea that might be his salvation he's reminded by that damned voice just how futile it is. That little speck of conscience that won't just leave him alone. It was to remind him that all the destruction was his fault because that's all he's capable of. He doesn't fight it, doesn't argue with it, there's no point. No point to anything anymore.

He knows his apathy is because likely he's in shock, as well as the fact all the fatigue was catching up on him again. He might have slept for several days but he'd hardly call himself well-rested. Not to mention starved and most likely dehydrated too. He sniffed and shook himself, pinched at the raw skin nipped by the suppression bands on his wrists to keep himself in the present as he waited for the inevitable. It was pathetic, though that was nothing new, but how else should he react to seeing his life-long Idol literally condemn him? And not just in front of the other Heroes but the League of Villains too. Plus he had no doubt the media had been watching it all unfurl. If they saw, then *everyone* saw. If All Might thinks he's a Villain then everyone who saw would think so too. The Number 1 Hero saying so must mean it's true, no matter how much he wants it to be otherwise. He's sure the Hag will be holding this over him for the rest of his life.

Because she was right about you all along.

Everything the League told him over those few days had been proved right in a simple pitied stare. It didn't matter what the truth was, not that it ever had mattered when it came to Katsuki. All Might clearly held no hope for him. He'd thought if anyone was going to take his side (other than stupid Deku) then it would be All Might. Right? It hadn't seem too farfetched, the Symbol of Peace, a Hero who seems to see the good in everyone... everyone but him.

Because there was nothing good in you to begin with!

Everyone could see it... just not him. He'd been in denial for so long considering it as fact had his gut churning even harder. He wanted to throw up, wanted some excuse to get himself moving, out of this hopeless stutter he was stuck in. But there was no strength left in him, nothing in him at all.

Pathetic. Villain.

Katsuki could feel it, beneath of the numbness and never-ending sensation of falling, he was done. There was no way out of this fuck up. He'd be lucky if they didn't ban him from ever getting a licence, or worse at this point. He wanted it to stop, wanted everything to just give him a chance to catch up before slamming the next problem in his face. The desire to make it *all* stop for good was terrifying. Overwhelming to the point Katsuki found the only way to clear his head was by pressing the hard edges of his ragged nails into already broken skin around the suppressors with all the force he could muster. But still the only clear way to escape this inner turmoil and defeat

seemed too unthinkable and it persisted.

“Bakugou Katsuki?”

The sound of his name being spoken, breaking the long silence, startled him, but he was in no rush to face his would be accuser, even if they sounded more concerned than anyone he'd encountered so far that night. Instead, Katsuki continued his blind stare across the room, feeling his eyes well and blaming it on the fact he was refusing to blink. If he blinked then he'd cry and he didn't want to cry. Not in front of someone who already thought so little of him. He didn't want to admit how weak he was or how overwhelming this all was. How much he wanted someone to tell him things weren't as fucked as they seemed. He clenched his fists tighter, feeling his muscles strain against the restraints, the itching need to spark off unreachable. The pain... marginally calming.

“Hey, kid. It's alright.”

Refusing to look up Katsuki ignored the sincerity in the disembodied voice and tried to not flinch at the shadow passing over him as they sat down beside him. It might be what he wanted to hear but he couldn't trust it was that simple, it was never that simple.

The heat from their presence sat beside him was enticing, he found his body leaning towards them, the want to just collapse onto their shoulder, the desire to just let go so intense it was difficult to ignore. But he couldn't, not like anyone would want someone like him anywhere near them.

“I'm Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa. I'm the one in charge of the League case.” The Detective explained, keeping his voice steady and mostly void of any emotion.

What he really means is 'The you case'.

Katsuki creases his brow at the return of that damn fucking voice. It hadn't really stopped but now he was really hearing it again. The worst part, it didn't sound anything like his mother anymore, not even remotely. It was his own voice through and through. It's hard to admit, but hearing his own conscience convey the true meaning of what he's been hearing from others is a lot less exhausting than the constant uphill battle he had put up before.

“I understand that this has to be all quite overwhelming, you've been through a lot these past few days. We're currently trying to get in

touch with your emergency contacts but so far no one has answered. Is there anyone else you can think of that you'd like us to try?"

The sincerity is stunning. Katsuki considers his question all the same. Is there anyone? Is there a single person out there who'd answer a call if they knew it concerned him? Who would be willing to claim a Villain after what just happened?

His parents were likely ignoring the calls out of spite, hoping that he'll learn something if he's left to wallow in the mess of his own making for as long as possible. Of all the other people he knows, he finds Auntie Inko coming to mind. But he quickly brushes that thought to the side. He hasn't seen Deku's mom in person for a long time. He doubted she'd have anything nice to say to him, let alone want to stand by him right now. As kind-hearted and pure as she was, he knew everyone had a limit. For most *he* was that limit. So, no, he wouldn't bother the Nerd, or his family, this was his problem. Staying as far away as he can is what he should have done from the beginning, from that very first time he hurt the Nerd. Long before Icy-Hot warned him off, he should have been smart enough to pick up on the not so subtle hints that he wasn't wanted or needed.

But then who else was there? His teacher? Aizawa-sensei? He'd be good, right? The Pro could keep an eye on him, hold back his Quirk, keep him down with his capture weapon if he snapped. If the man was still alive... or maybe Best Jeanist? If anyone knew how to handle him, it would be someone who'd done it before, right? But even that seemed pointless. Katsuki didn't want to risk being anywhere near anyone. He wanted to be left alone, put somewhere he couldn't even dream of causing more harm or problems for anyone ever again. There were only two places he could think of that stood even a sliver of a chance of meeting those criteria. Prison... in whatever form it took, or... the closet.

Wouldn't it be better if you just got rid of yourself for the good of everyone? Just think how much better the world would be without you!

He hated that idea, it terrified him that it was even forming as an option in his mind. He wouldn't let himself entertain that idea just yet. The thought of all that wasted effort and not just on his part; his parents, his teachers, all the work they'd put into him would be for nothing if he just let himself lie down and give up. He didn't want to give up. The notion was horrible. But it was the option he kept coming back to.

If there was some way he could fix all of this, *any* way at all, of putting things in their perfect place and ridding the world of his fuck ups he'd do it in a heartbeat. Only problem was, there was no way of fixing it so easily and continuing on as planned. Nothing he did would ever repair this. His actions so far had only succeeded in making things worse. Availing of the convenient 'out' his brain keep humbly offering seemed too much like cheating. If he was meant to suffer then he would. Suffer right to the very end.

Those kind of thoughts were daunting, but some part of Katsuki understood that if it was the only way to make it all go away, to make *everyone* happy. Then he'd do it. He just had make sure to exhaust every other possibility first.

The smell of cheap coffee permeating the air draws him back from the darker edges of his mind. Hot steam wafts against his cheek and he's glad for the little extra warmth it brings. Everything has been so cold since camp, and while he wasn't overly fond of coffee the bitter scent was familiar, calming, grounding. Reminded him of something... someone. But his mind was still in too much of a haze to conjure up who.

Curiosity got the better of him then. Katsuki tore his gaze away from the wall and the ticking clock following the smell and warmth. The only other people present were the Officers they'd posted to keep an eye on him and a new face. Detective Tsukauchi. He was much younger than Katsuki would have expected of a Detective on such a high profile case. Not the stereotypical old and stubbled, cigar smoking veteran he'd seen in the few movies he'd ever watched. He looked, amicable... decent even as far as people go. But Katsuki knew too those looks could be just as deceitful and lethal as words, it could be an expertly placed mask hiding true intentions. A trick to get his guard down even further. Yet, the innocent look on the older man's face set a small doubt into that learned truth.

"Coffee?" the Detective offered, holding the paper cup of steaming liquid closer to him.

Katsuki blinked at him. He had to wonder what kind of game he was playing, what the goal was with this act. He eyed the coffee. He'd never actually tried the stuff, brewed maybe over a few thousand cups for his parents over the years, but he'd always avoided things with high caffeine levels for obvious reasons. His blood pressure and baseline adrenaline was already higher than average with his Quirk, adding caffeine to the mix wasn't a good idea. Suppressors and all, he

didn't want to end up with exploding a police station added to the list of things he was responsible for.

He eyed the Detective and then the drink. He couldn't have it, even if he wanted to. What he wanted never has and never will matter. So he shakes his head looking back at the same spot on the wall and promptly tried to go back to his silent contemplation. When the sound of crinkling plastic and sloshing comes from beside him he looks back.

"How about water then?"

Katsuki eyes the bottle, cold and unopened, definitely not tampered with. He wasn't aware he was licking his dry lips with an even dryer tongue until he heard Tsukauchi chuckle; light and airy, not intended to be demeaning. Still the thought that he was being mocked for having basic needs was there. And he couldn't get the thought that this was another trick out of his head.

"Take it. It's yours if you want it." Tsukauchi tells him, taking a sip of the coffee while looking away and holding out the bottle towards him.

Trembling hands reached and Katsuki dared to take the drink, all the while he tried to suppress the shaking. Is this what his life had come to? Overthinking the tiniest acts of kindness from literally everyone? Overthinking every move he makes to the point he doesn't know if he should move at all? He felt exhausted just accepting a simple drink, but as he sipped finding himself feeling a little more alive he found it a move worth making.

"I know this is the last place on earth you'd want to be after all that madness, but we do have some questions. And we need to take a statement. If you're up to it I'll be the one asking them. You don't have to right now, if you don't feel like talking you can write it out and this can wait a few days. But understand, it will have to happen at some point. Sooner rather than later."

Katsuki soaked up his words, still gulping down the water. The considerate tone, the slow pace with which they were spoken, the fact that Katsuki couldn't pick up any malice or ulterior motives was all too much for him. It was like this man actually wanted him to listen, to hear his words and know he meant well. He was the police, a Detective, someone he should trust. Tsukauchi could help him... if he let him.

Like you trusted All Might to save you? Because that worked out so well for you.

And wasn't that the truth. Everyone he'd ever hoped would see his efforts, or would acknowledge him, and aid his goals, had done the complete opposite. Why would this Detective be any different?

Like always, there was no real choice for him. He had to do this, had to get his truth out. He couldn't be quiet any longer. The sooner the better but speaking still seemed a mile off as he tried and failed to give an answer. His mouth opened and closed but no sound escaped him. He was scared of saying the wrong thing, in the wrong way. Lately everything he'd said had ended up having the opposite effect he intended, it was safer to say nothing. And he hated that, could feel his frustration building. One of the Officer's at the hallway entrance was eyeing him with his hand on the stun baton hanging on his belt. If he does something wrong he's done for. Of all the places, he should feel safe here, but he doesn't. Not here, not at home or UA... nowhere. Nowhere is safe.

Tsukauchi calmly leans forward breaking his line of sight on the guard and forcing Katsuki to focus on him.

"Like I said this doesn't need to happen right now. It can wait. Honestly, I'd rather that they brought you to a hospital than here. Four days is a long time to spend alone with Villains. Must have been hard."

They sounded like questions, but Tsukauchi didn't wait long enough to give him any chance to answer before carrying on, filling the silence and keeping his attention. The man simply sips on his coffee every now and then, distracting him. Talks about how uncomfortable the chairs are and how annoying it must be for him having to wait here in the cold. And Katsuki... he finds himself, grateful for the endless ramble. Grateful to not have to think about *it*, even for a few moments. He found it wasn't unlike listening to Deku ramble, only much more coherent and purposeful. It was slight, but he thinks he felt his lips attempt a small smile at the thought. If there was someone he wouldn't mind being here right now, for some dumbass reason, it would be Deku; even if it might raise a million more problems for him, he had a feeling Deku would understand.

"I'm sure you're exhausted." Tsukauchi spoke again after a long drawn out silence that Katsuki hadn't even noticed. He follows the man as he stands, "I'll be right back."

Without any hesitation Katsuki finds himself reaching out, his hand darting forward and falling short as Tsukauchi walked away, leaving

him alone. Alone where his thoughts and the heaviness of reality could seep back into his bones and bury him alive. Just as easy as it came, the second Tsukauchi leaves his line of sight, the calm leaves with him. What he wouldn't give to not feel anything ever again.

It takes nearly an hour, he knows only because he watched each second pass on the clock that ticked too loudly in the quiet, trying not to get lost in the turmoil in his head and failing miserably, but as promised Tsukauchi returns to him.

Katsuki feels like he's been sleeping with his eyes open. The edges of everything blurred and distorted and he doesn't know if it's from the hunger or the tiredness, or one of the other million things wrong with him. Right now all he wants is to wrap himself in darkness and pass out forever.

Looking up Katsuki sees the Detective, a blanket tucked under his arm, heading towards him. Only the look on Tsukauchi's face is different from before, more serious and stern. For a second Katsuki worries that he's done something wrong, that maybe somewhere in that long stretched out hour he did something he wasn't aware of. Then the sound echoing down the hallway tells him it's even worse than that.

He hears the rushed clack of heels on hard tiles and the ingrained response is already triggered. His body tenses. He's on the edge of his seat debating whether or not getting up to run is a viable option and ends up standing up stock still as a result. Her voice, louder than it needs to be indoors resonates down the hall as several other voices try to placate her fury.

Tsukauchi doesn't pause or wait, he approaches him fast but still slow enough to let Katsuki see the movements as they happen. He casts the blanket, some old and battered brown thing, over his shoulders and wraps him up comfortably, firmly. The smile on the Detective's face is tense, like he's learned something he doesn't like but he's aware he can't do anything about it.

"Pretty sure you can tell, but your parents are here. I'm going to ask you one question, okay? Only one. Answer in any way you can." Katsuki won't ever admit his heart leapt into this throat, he didn't like the ominous feeling in the air. The possible questions he might be asked, the potential for getting it wrong at the forefront of his worries for a split second. Nothing could have prepared him for what he was asked though. "Do you *want* to go home with your parents?"

The sensation as best he could describe it was like when the Hag would slap him out of nowhere. He was stunned, astonished that it could ever be a possibility. What kind of question was that? It's not like he had a choice, if his parents were here then had to go with them. For all intents and purposes he *belonged* to them... until he turns 18 and 18 is a such long, long way away. But if Tsukauchi is asking him then maybe he does have a choice. Before he could muster the strength to answer, the sound of those heels was already too close.

“KATSUKI!”

Katsuki doesn't recall ever being more afraid at the sound of his mother's raised voice. Normally when she sounded like this they were at home, there was no one there to witness the lengths she went to; this was the worst he'd ever heard her, and that fact just made him freeze up all the more. The Hag rounded the corner, the Officers moving out of her way as a handful more gave chase to her from behind. Tsukauchi moved in between them. Katsuki didn't know what to think or feel, he was frozen in place. Mind both numbed and racing at once, giving rise to a throbbing headache. Maybe Dabi was right about him getting sick after all.

He stood trying to fathom what possible reasons Tsukauchi, a complete stranger, could have for acting like this. Katsuki knew from experience that getting in the Hag's way was only going to make it worse in the long run. He should warn the Detective, somehow. It would be better for everyone if they just let it happen. Despite the anxiety crushing his heart it's exactly what he planned to do once she got her hands on him.

“Ugh, you again?! You can't keep me from seeing my son, *Detective!*” The Hag snapped, sharp finger pointing at Tsukauchi before her arms folded. She seemed to tower over him in her heels, sharp red eyes narrowed like blades at the man. Katsuki wondered what had happened in the past hour and could only watch as they faced each other.

“Bakugou-san, just like I told you at the reception... given the situation there are several security checks in place that need to be adhered to before anything further can happen. Security checks you refused to submit to. I'm sorry, but you can't see him until you've done that.”

“He's *my* son, *I* birthed him. *I* raised the brat, you have no right to keep him from me!”

“Mitsuki...” came his father’s timid voice, equally hesitant steps accompanying his words. There was sheet of paper in his hands, probably from doing the security checks she’d refused; he was always the more ‘reasonable’ of his parents, even if he didn’t give a shit. “It doesn’t take long. Just... you should fill out the paperwork honey...”

The sound that came from her at his father’s attempt at calming things was close to a growl, the anger clear but the annoyance even more so as she huffed and puffed like an angered wolf ready to take down the building. Katsuki clutched at the edges of the blanket, it was rough with age but the weight on his shoulders was grounding and not in a world ending way. He would much rather prefer the painful silence to this right incessant arguing right now.

“Fine.” She snapped, sending Katsuki a threatening glare when he caught her eye when he peeked around Tsukauchi’s broad form. It was all he needed to confirm his expectations. He was in for it, the second they were out of here she was going to let him know exactly what she thought about this latest fuck up.

His Old Man laughed, an awkward chuckle as she stormed back the way she came, the crew of officers disbanding as she did. “Heh, sorry about the wife, she’s been worried sick with stress since we got the call.”

Katsuki found that difficult to believe and he got the feeling Tsukauchi was of the same mind. He hadn’t backed down even with the Hag gone now. It was odd enough to have someone agreeing with him, even if it was unspoken. He couldn’t help but wonder if this was some tactic to make him speak more when the time inevitably came. He’d call it effective if it wasn’t being used on him.

“If you don’t mind my saying, Bakugou-san, your wife doesn’t seem to be all that worried at all.”

His Old Man bristled at the words, dark eyes flicking to Katsuki as if to ask *what have you said to them?* He wanted to assure his dad that he’d said nothing, but still words failed him. It was like his throat was clamped shut, it was a miracle he could still breathe at this point. He thankful to some degree, he didn’t want to make things worse and the best way for him avoid that was to do nothing.

“That’s just how she is, Detective. Been like that since he was born, always in a such rush to make sure he’s safe that she forgets herself.” His father answered smoothly, before softening his gaze as he looked

back at Katsuki, playing the role of perfect caring father in company as always. "You alright son?"

Katsuki shuddered at the attention now solely on him, and he seized up again. Once again, Tsukauchi was moving to cover him, as if he knew the simple presence of his father was stressing him out. Was he that obvious? Was his weakness seeping through that clearly for all to see?

"Katsuki? What's wrong? What did they do to him? He's alright, isn't he? They didn't hurt him too much?" that feigned tone of concern was creeping in, lacing every word. Even if the worry his Old Man was conveyed seemed awfully convincing Katsuki had long ago decided not to put any stock in it being real.

"Your son has been through a lot in the past four days, Bakugou-san. I know Pro Heroes who've been through less and come out worse. He's impressive for someone so young and given time he'll be back to himself. But right now, he needs time and space. Even from you."

Katsuki felt his jaw drop, his mind skipping over the typical urge to refuse any idea that he might be shaken by the recent events but there was no arguing with it. He *was* shaken. He'd been kidnapped and kept in chains for days while the Villain's that took him confused the fuck out of him with polar opposite ideas and ideals. He'd gone from simply hoping for the best outcome at camp to causing a myriad of problems for the whole of Japan in record time. He was clearly a blight on the reputation of UA, on his parents and their business even before this shitstorm. But Tsukauchi, somehow, still held faith in him. It was like Dabi all over again, only much less villainous. The fact that he wasn't accusing him directly or blaming it all on *his* weakness was new. Sure that was mainly his parents favourite thing to do, but he'd never met an adult not set on critiquing everything about him.

Against his better judgment his shoulders dropped as he relaxed, and his shaking calmed a little too. He found himself moving closer to the Detective and it scared him. Just like with everyone there was a chance this was a trick, some ploy to get him vulnerable again. Heh, he didn't think he could feel any more vulnerable at this point, but then again he hadn't thought things could get any worse than Todoroki telling the class in the beginning and look where that landed him. Katsuki was past trying to convince himself things wouldn't get worse when that's all they seemed to do. He wasn't holding out faith that this would work out in his favour either. No matter how much he wished it was a predefined certainty that he'd get the short end of the

stick.

He stood, idling with nothing to do, as his father just stared at Tsukauchi like he'd grown an extra head right before his eyes. Katsuki had never seen the man so stunned. In all his memories his parents were always prepared, always had some sort of response for any possible question or statement. He sorely doubted this was going to be any different and was proved right once his Old Man recovered himself.

"Well, ahem... of course he'll need space. I understand that. I just want to know if they hurt him at all. He is my son and he just spent several days with Villain's. I was worried about him too."

And there it was, back in full force. The pleasant side that only people outside the privacy of their home got to see. The *good* parent that worried in earnest for his only son and who wanted the best for him too. A persona which only existed to make his father appear just like any normal father with a normal son. Just how the Hag liked it. And Tsukauchi would fall for it, just like everyone else.

Katsuki could feel himself become resigned at the mere thought. He had to act normal to fit in with the act too. It would only look worse if he didn't, but still, there was no force on earth that could make him emote anything other than the numb shock on his face. At least the need to cry was gone.

Gripping the edge of the blanket around his shoulders coaxing some calming heat back into himself, Katsuki waited for the usual rhetoric; his father would express his concern and Tsukauchi would play into the idea that his father was anything but the concerned parent he played.

Yet, like it had become fond of doing so lately, life just seemed to enjoy fucking with him. Why stop now that everything had already gone to shit?

"Were you?" Tsukauchi asked. The question was loaded, dripping with unspoken accusations that were clear as day even to Katsuki.

Both Katsuki and his father balked at the gall of question. Katsuki because the fact that anyone would question his father at all just seemed too much to comprehend. His Old Man because in his *good* parent role he couldn't fathom why anyone would question his concern in the first place. It was such a good act, even Katsuki used to fall for it until he learned through enough repetition that the second

they were behind closed doors the veil would be lifted. It was as much a lesson for him on how he *should* act as it was a reminder of what his bad behaviour was making him miss out on. But Tsukauchi, he continued to stand between them, like an impenetrable wall. The man didn't seem intent on moving at all. Katsuki stood behind him, practically pressed right against him, not sure if what was happening was even real. No one had *ever* questioned his parents before. Not for any reason.

"And just what are you insinuating? That I don't care about my own son?!" his Old Man exclaimed, looking to Katsuki with false pleading in his eyes as if asking him to prove otherwise. Even if he could speak there was no way Katsuki was doing that. One of the first things they'd beat into him was that lying was bad. Not to mention the last thing he wanted was to get home and face his punishment for this. Cowardly as it was he wanted a chance to come to terms with it all first and he wasn't sure how long that was going to take. He'd gladly take any extra second he could get.

"My team, Local Police, Heroes *and* the staff at UA have been trying to contact you since the initial attack on the summer camp *four* days ago. You'd think that many missed calls inside the first twenty-four hours would have you and your wife down here a lot quicker than this last minute appearance."

The Old Man looked like he'd been slapped in the face. Katsuki would laugh if he found it appropriate. His dad stood stunned, mouth gaping like a suffocating fish, as his mind whirled trying to respond suitably. Lucky for him, and unluckily for Katsuki, he was saved by the clacking beat of returning heels. Adding the fact that she'd overheard Tsukauchi's admonishment just made it worse for everyone.

"Do you speak to every civilian like that? Detective Tsukauchi was it? I'm sure your superiors would *love* to hear all about it too. We got here as soon as we could, not being in the country and work caused a few issues on our end. But we're here now, and we'll be leaving. Come on Katsuki."

The stress on the syllables of his name would normally have him flinching back from her. If he didn't already know she was out for blood she'd have broadcasted it well with that delivery. Yet he couldn't find the energy in him to react to her command. What surprised him more was just how stubborn the Tsukauchi was being still. He stood there, just shy of glaring at both his parents. The Hag returning it tenfold, his Old Man taking on the role of unassuming

husband stood timid beside her again. All the while Katsuki watched, unable to say a word and wishing the ground would swallow him whole. If he could save anyone, if he could be a *Hero* just once, even if no one would ever know about it then maybe he'd be able to save Tsukauchi's reputation. Because if the Hag had her way he'd never recover from this.

With fists clenched around the blanket he conjured up all the courage he could and stepped out from behind Tsukauchi, going as far as he dared until meeting his mother's gaze and like always in company a switch in her flipped. That harsh stare turned soft, and the furrow of anger in her brow upturned into concern. All false, meant to fool everyone into thinking she was just as loving and concerned about him as any other mother. Like she was someone who wanted nothing more than to see her little boy was safe. And he supposed on some grounds the last part was true. She wanted him to be alright, if only so that she didn't have to waste her own time and effort on making him better. Together with his father their act was fool proof, at least until today.

"Oh Baby, come here. You look exhausted. Have they not been treating you well?" she cooed sending another accusing glare at Tsukauchi.

Katsuki didn't have a chance to brace himself before her hands were on him, pulling him close, fussing needlessly over every inch she could pinch and prod. He didn't have it in him to shout at her, or to even try and push her off. He knew any attempts would only anger her further. It was little effort to hold himself back from cursing and snapping as she brushed his hair back and examined him as she if really gave a shit. The League of Villains hadn't really hurt him, but every touch from her made him feel like he was burning alive. And when she stripped him of the blanket, and it might be extreme, but it felt like losing a limb. He couldn't help the quiet whimper that passed his lips as she dumped it on the floor, he felt so much colder without it already.

"What is that rag? Nevermind, let's get home. Yeah?" She told him, pressing her palm again his cheek. It was more or less an order as she grabbed harshly on a tender shoulder to pull him forward. The bruises might be gone by now, but Endeavour hurling him across the battlefield was painful now that he was more aware and he was sure there'd be a few new ones.

"I'm afraid it won't be that simple." Tsukauchi spoke, his own hand

coming to rest on his other shoulder; his hold more gentle than hers. “Given the situation certain contingencies have been put in place, you’ll need to fill out more paperwork before he leaves. Then you’ll be escorted by squad cars and a patrol team assigned to your neighbourhood until such a time that we can be sure the League aren’t still targeting him.”

The Hag huffed once again, glaring back over her shoulder. Katsuki felt her nails dig into his collarbone, as she clearly fought to maintain her composure. The numbness he felt was the only thing stopping him from making any more noise as he waited for her next move. She sighed loud and obnoxious, before fitting her face with a false smile that didn’t succeed in masking her annoyance. She turned fully to face Tsukauchi.

“Ma’am, until you’ve done the appropriate paperwork, he stays.” Tsukauchi tells her firmly before she has a chance to speak.

Her demeanour shifts in a heartbeat, the false smile less false and suddenly it’s no bother to do as he asks. “Lead the way, Detective.” Her tone was clipped and still she didn’t let go of him. “I’d rather get this over with as quick as possible.”

“If you’d like to head back to reception, I’m certain the staff there will gladly help you.” She tried to make off dragging Katsuki with her, but Tsukauchi kept his more gentle hand on him and pulled him back. “Your son stays.”

If Katsuki didn’t know any better he’d say she’d accepted it but he *did* know better and he knew that face. She was pissed at having her authority over him questioned; by the police no less. He was surprised still that she hadn’t just blown up at everyone, or him, or simply requested he be locked away forever. Though he was certain she was saving the worst of her ire for when they got home.

It was his Old Man that finally got her moving. His own hand taking hers tentatively and lightly pulling her away as she continued to glare daggers at Tsukauchi, “The sooner we get that paperwork done the sooner we can get him home love. He’s been safe here so far... a few more minutes won’t hurt.”

With a frown she turned and stormed off, snatching her hand back from his father; her heels echoing down the hall and away once again. The Old Man was slow to give chase only looking back to tell Katsuki they’d be back in no time. For all Katsuki cared they could take

forever; he wasn't in any rush, the longer he got to spend in this purgatory between what's happened and the end game the better.

The rough feel of the blanket brushing against his neck startled him and he turned to see the Tsukauchi staring off after his parents warily. His eyes softened when he looked down at Katsuki, the warmth of his palms resting on his shoulders steadying him from the swaying he hadn't noticed was claiming his balance. Tsukauchi urged him to take a few deep breaths, guiding him to sit again at the same time. When had he started struggling? He hadn't noticed how stressed that short interaction made him, maybe if he wasn't already so out of it he'd have a better handle on himself. That thought prompted him to wonder if he'd ever had a good handle on himself with just how reliant he was on everyone else's guidance.

"So..." he looked up at Tsukauchi who looked much less threatening now his parents were gone. "*Do* you want to go home with them?"

As if by magic, or perhaps by just how calm he felt around this man, Katsuki found his voice. "I- I have to..."

He remembers the last time he thought he had a choice. Remembered how simply saying no and refusing an undeserved medal got him chained up and humiliated on live television. This was much the same. He was damned if he did, damned if he didn't. Chains and binding waited for him whatever his decision he was sure of it. There wasn't any true choice. Though the familiarity of home seemed more pleasant than a cold cell in prison.

"It's entirely up to you. If you want to go with *them*, I'll be around to visit in few days' time."

"W-why?"

"I still need to get your statement, remember?"

Katsuki only nodded in response, going back to staring blankly across the hall. "You can look after my blanket for me in the meantime right?"

Katsuki didn't feel capable of looking after himself let alone an inanimate object. Still a small part of him felt insulted that the Detective had even asked if he could. Clearly he wasn't all that dependable if this is what he was being entrusted with. How had he ever thought himself capable enough to be a Hero?

The act of Katsuki pulling the blanket tighter to himself was answer enough he hoped. The few words he'd spoken were draining enough. He just wanted to sleep away the next millennia and forget about everything, to be forgotten too if at all possible. But he'd already decided against that easy way out, and that meant he'd have to bear it all. Regardless of how heavy the burden he was going to carry it. Now, if only he could muster the effort the grin the whole way through it too.

Clutching tightly to the edges of the blanket as the sound of heels started coming back their way once again, Katsuki reminded himself he deserved what was coming. It was all his fault. Tsukauchi gave him a gentle squeeze, his hold not at all hurtful as he leaned closer.

"Remember, it's your choice."

If only that were true.

The Hag was on him in a second and before he knew what was happening she was pulling him up and frowning at the sight of the blanket on his shoulders again. Her attempt to get rid of it failed this time as Katsuki clutched onto it like a lifeline. Clearly not wanting to waste any more of her time she instead began to drag him along. Only Katsuki dug his heels in, he really didn't want to go with her, he was too familiar with what was waiting for him, it was bound to be beyond the worst of his imagination this time.

"Katsuki..." It was odd hearing someone other than his parents say his given name. Looking up to Tsukauchi and seeing a sincerely genuine look of concern directed at him had his hearted leaping and his stomach rolling. "You can stay if you want to."

"He wants to go with us... his *parents*. Right baby?" his mother insisted, her grip tightening on him.

Katsuki looked right at Tsukauchi as the man waited for his answer. He had to wonder what he'd done to deserve such patience from a stranger. The whole scene flashed before his eyes. If he said no, the Hag would kick up a storm, accuse them of manipulating him and taking advantage of him. It would be their fault if he went against her, even if it was his own will. He'd save this good Detective the trouble. He didn't need the Hag making his job and life all the harder. Like he said, they'd see each other again in a few days.

"I want to go with them." He spoke plainly, making sure not to stutter. It was the first real lie he'd told someone in a long time. He wasn't all

that good at lying, but then he wasn't all that good at the truth either since no one fucking believed him about anything.

As the Hag pulled him away Katsuki couldn't help but look back at the Detective. Tsukauchi kept his eyes on him too even as his Old Man stayed behind to speak with him. From the furrow in the young Detectives' brow he'd hazard a guess and say his father was going unheard. It wasn't until he and the Hag were turning the corner that he looked down to his scuffed shoes, all too aware of the nails digging hard into his flesh, a small taster of what was to come.

The drive home was what Katsuki would call *tense*, for lack of any substantial brain power to think of a better word. It was a quiet countdown to what probably wouldn't be too bad, for the next few days at least. Detective Tsukauchi was quick to inform his Old Man that he'd be visiting them in two days' time to get Katsuki's statement. He also advised them to stop by the hospital or at least call out a doctor from a cleared listed to check him over. The Hag had laughed when the Old Man told her that in the car. Not the happy kind of laugh but a snarky scoff that was almost like she was saying *as if I'd waste the time and effort*. It came as no surprise. He'd come to expect the bare minimum and nothing more, he had to put the effort in if he wanted something. Even something as simple. And right now effort was just asking too much.

There was a police car was in front and another behind them the whole way, leading the way to the place he'd spent his entire life hoping to be enough. The place where now he knew he didn't have a hope in hell of ever having a moments peace ever again.

There were no sirens this time, only the red emergency lights mostly lost in the much brighter light of day than when he last seen it. The car was quiet, but he could feel the heated anger polluting the air. He couldn't breathe, holding himself back from gasping for a breath as he clutched at the blanket still on his shoulders; he'd not let go of it if he could manage. If he dared to crack the window for even a wisp of cool

air he's sure he'd never hear the end of it.

With the house coming into view, he felt his heart begin to race faster, a sinking feeling claiming his empty guts as he suddenly wished he was going anywhere else. The police car ahead of them continued on, to circle the streets and do a quick sweep most likely. The other parked up at the end of the drive after his mother pulled in and parked.

They sat there in silence for a minute. A minute that felt like an eternity. Katsuki not daring to just get out, afraid to do anything without permission now. Like a live wire literally anything could trigger her into a mood. And she was already in one of course, but the difference between knowing about it and *knowing about it* could be as small as swallowing too loud.

The Hag didn't even look at him as she unbuckled herself. She got out without a word and stormed off, slamming every door behind her. The whole vehicle shook with the force. Katsuki just watched her go, trying to plan out the best course of action for now and coming up with nothing. Hearing his father finally speak to him, his heart was in his throat and he couldn't breathe.

"Katsuki, you... you're mother and I... we're... disappointed to say the least. Get up to your room. And for god sake behave yourself. You've caused ample problems for us before but this is by far the worst. Do *not* cause any more trouble. Just do as you're told for once in your life. You're lucky we didn't just leave you there. I know your mother wanted to."

His old man turned around in his seat to look at him, seeing the sorry sight he was he only sighed before getting out and waving to the officer sat in the car behind them. With a fake smile on his face he eagerly urged Katsuki to get inside, opening the door for him and waiting. It would be a good enough escape being confined to his bedroom. Even he wasn't mad enough to look this gift horse in the mouth. It was better than the closet at least.

He did as he was told, lethargically slipping out of the back seat. He tried to rush himself through the door but just doing as asked was tiring him. He fared no better on the stairs. He felt like he was running several marathons, one after the other. The closer he got to perceived safety the more like jelly he felt. Katsuki was more than prepared to collapse to the floor the second he got there.

The doorknob was cold against his warm, slick palms and that safety was shattered as he pushed the door open to see the Hag in his room already. She was collecting up his things into yet another box. Nothing left, even the hardback textbooks and notebooks he'd use for school were gone. Anything that resembled anything comforting, gone. Bare bones, that's all he had now. If it wasn't his own he'd say this room belonged to no one at all.

She was silent as she lifted his sketchbooks and the few small Hero figures he owned. His old laptop too. He watched as his extra blankets and bedsheets disappeared with the rest of his few belongings, his mother depositing them without care into the box. She stomped across the whole room, lifting anything that might betray his personality, before finishing her round by checking the balcony door was locked and removing the key. No chance of freedom, not that he'd be any safer outside.

The Hag turned to him then and he'd like to say he didn't flinch but he did. The scuffed toes of his shoes were so suddenly interesting as he dipped his head to avoid her harsh gaze. His fists tightened around the edge of the blanket still wrapped around his shoulders, hoping, praying that she wouldn't take that too. He'd already disappointed so many people, he didn't want to add Tsukauchi to that list too. If he couldn't look after a damned inanimate object there was less than no hope for him.

He heard her sigh deep and rough, as she approached him. Her manicured fingers slipped lightly over his shoulders and snatched the blanket from around him. He watched as it joined the rest of his things in the box.

"Katsuki... look at me." She ordered.

It took all his strength to lift his head to meet her cold gaze. The second their eyes met she slapped him. His head forced away from her and his cheek heating up. He waited for another, but instead her hands crept up to cup his cheeks and forced him to look at her once more. It was like she was looking for something, a reason perhaps, to let out more of her frustrations. Frustrations he knew she was holding back on acting out. A quick glance told him as much, her face seemed calm, concerned even, but he couldn't make himself meet her eyes again, not with the glimmer of anger brewing there.

"You really enjoy making my life difficult don't you? What did you expect to get from behaving like this, baby? Hmm? What are you

getting out of this? *Why* are you like this?"

His throat is still raw, the few hours he's had are hardly enough to recover from all he's been through. He couldn't leave her unanswered, as much as she probably didn't expect an answer he had to try.

"I didn't... want this..."

"Tch. Of course you didn't. Nothing's ever your fault is it?" she sighed, brushing back his hair as best she could scoffing in disgust. He knew he was bound to be disgusting; sweat and dirt and debris; he'd not washed in days (through no fault of his own) and even that felt like too much of a task. She sighed again before pushing his face away and walking to his closet. He used to hide things in there, long ago before she caught on to it. He'd long since stopped but she liked to check anyway. His new hiding place was the one place she'd never go, it involved getting on her knees; something she was far too proud to do. That however was the least of his worries.

"Count yourself lucky that Detective is coming over in a few days, a few slaps will be the least of your worries once that's over. You can't expect to end All Might's career and be the reason why several Pro Heroes are in the hospital and not take any responsibility for it!"

He felt like his heart stopped as he replayed her words. End... All Might's career... what was she saying? What did that mean? He struggled to speak, the panic and stress taking over him already as the Hag grabbed the box and left his room. She turned with a harsh glare aimed at him.

"Stay in here and think about what you've done. At the very least fucking learn something from it this time."

He nodded vigorously as she slammed the door on her way out. He waited until her footsteps disappeared, tracking it from his door to the spare room and back down the stairs. He stayed stock still afraid to make even the smallest noise before standing became too much trouble. He dove towards the edge of the bed, his top half landing on the worn mattress he'd owned for too long, the rise just enough to save his knees from hitting the floor too hard and summoning her back.

Her words circled his head as he pulled at his hair, *end All Might's career...* did that mean All Might had lost? Did him freezing cause all this? Was him being weak enough to get caught in the first place the catalyst? What else though? No matter how he retraced it he couldn't

find any scenario where it wasn't his fault, where he wasn't somehow involved. He covered his mouth, clenching at his jaw until it hurt to hold back his pathetic sobs. He could taste the sweet tang of nitroglycerin on his palm that couldn't be triggered with the restraints still on his wrists. His dad had the key now, instructed by Tsukauchi to remove them once he was fully calmed, and he didn't expect they'd let him take them off any time soon. At this rate he didn't want to. If everything he touched turned to shit then maybe giving him the power of explosion back wasn't advisable.

He muffled his cries in the mattress and kept his eyes shut to keep in the tears. He couldn't stand this, though he was alone he felt eyes on him felt like they were waiting for him to mess up again. Like his very existence was something that couldn't be trusted. He turned to see the old poster of All Might on his wall. Dulled and sun-bleached from being in the same place for years. The sight of that smile, the hope in those blue eyes he'd looked up to all his life sent spirals of guilt through his heart and at the very bottom it began to simmer and boil into a comfortable rage. All reaching the same question of *Why?*

Why hadn't he helped him? Why were Heroes always ignoring him, leaving him to fend for himself when he so clearly needed their help. And not just All Might... Best Jeanist, his teachers... fucking Endeavour too, they all would rather turn a blind eye to him struggling than do what any *real* Hero would and help him. The Number 1 would rather watch him suffer than offer a helping hand, he'd rather save Deku or literally anyone else before he'd even consider Katsuki?! He wasn't just up making excuses he'd seen it with his own eyes. They were all quick to put the blame on him and he hated it. He fucking hated it so much.

Before he knew it he was on his feet, running on autopilot. Without a thought in his head, he reached out and with abandon tore the poster of his Idol from the wall. He ripped and shredded the image, dropping to his knees to catch the smaller shreds that got away and tore them up even more. Against his better judgement he cursed and continued to rip at the image of his Hero. A Hero who had failed him time and time again. A Hero he'd had a bystanders hand in destroying. The thought made him freeze. He ended All Might. That's what the Hag said, what else could she have meant? His complete incompetence, his lacklustre being had been so useless that he'd ended up causing the chain of events that lead to this shit storm.

His mind shot back to what Shigaraki had said, *we've both been held down, and held back by Heroes.*

Katsuki kind of thinks it was him holding them back. With him in the picture, how many people had to suffer? He suddenly remembers the Officers they passed when they were leaving the station, *'current death toll at Kamino is in the fifty's, and that's only on the outskirts of the damaged zone. I heard Jeanist might not make it and All Might... jeez... don't get me started.*

It was all because of him... because of him, people were hurt or dead or dying.

He'd as good as *killed* All Might. If that didn't make him a Villain then what would?

"I hate you..." he mumbles to the tattered shreds of poster in his hands, wishing the Hag would come back to take off the damn cuffs just so he could burn it away. All Might's face is somehow still mostly intact, creased and deformed but that stunning smile is still beaming up at him.

"I fucking hate *you!*" he curses before slumping against the wall, beside his mirror.

His eyes drift to the tired wreck that is his reflection. Bloodshot red eyes, dark shadows hanging below them, his shirt is worn ragged, there's holes in his trousers and he's covered in dirt stains and what looks like it might be blood. Disgusting. That's what he is. He glares as best his can through the pain in his chest, in his head, in his entire body and clings to the shreds of the image of his idol, suddenly regretting tearing it up. Regretting every mistake he'd ever made.

Katsuki stares and stares and comes to a fairly obvious conclusion, looking himself in the eyes he dares not speak any louder than a whisper, "I fucking hate you."

Chapter End Notes

For Tsukauchi i'm going off the common idea that he has a truth quirk, literally couldn't find anything that said he did or didn't have a Quirk at all, but they call him 'True Man' so that's more than a little hint at why he's acting like he is :)

Next one shouldn't be too long, but i have a short peice for Katsuki's birthday to fix up and post too, so might come first, no promises :) Thanks for everyone who stuck the long wait and is still with this after so long too :) Looking forward to reading your comments.

Follow on twitter or updates and maybe drabbles :) <https://twitter.com/SuperiorKats>

Works inspired by this one

[Dark as a Hero](#) by [Ayolen](#), [Hollow](#) by [Ayolen](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!